

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 738

asked on Wednesday, 23 May 2007

MR LEE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER AND MINISTER ASSISTING THE PREMIER IN NORTH QUEENSLAND (MR WALLACE)—

QUESTION:

Will he provide details of the Government's water strategy?

ANSWER:

In 2005 the Government released the Queensland Water Plan 2005-2010 (the Water Plan) which contained a range of strategies for sustainable water management. These include securing water for the environment and for users, planning for future water needs, smarter use of existing water supplies, pricing water for sustainability, protecting water quality, compliance to protect users and the environment, and investing in science and technology.

The Water Plan provides a basis for a state-wide strategy to enhance water security and supply by providing new infrastructure, examining new sources of supply, and encouraging greater conservation and education across business, industry and the community. The effects of current prolonged drought in a large part of South East Queensland, require us to better manage the State's water resources, the potential impacts of climate change and the pressure of population growth.

The development of new storage and distribution infrastructure to meet potential shortfalls in supply and demand increases across the State, is a key plank of the Government's water strategy. In South East Queensland, the Government is in the process of building a water grid. This grid includes new dams at Traveston Crossing and Wyaralong, raising existing storages, water harvesting, a desalination plant at the Gold Coast, the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project, the Southern Regional Water Pipeline and other interconnecting pipelines.

In regional Queensland, the Government is building regional water infrastructure under the Statewide Water Policy, to meet the needs of communities and industry. The Government is raising existing storages, plus conducting planning and design work for new dams and weirs. It is also investing in the construction of pipelines to link key water infrastructure with areas of high demand growth in central and northern Queensland. A series of regional grids over the next few years will serve as the first step towards a state-wide water grid. The Government has recently announced the commencement of a scoping study into a pipeline from the Burdekin Basin to South East Queensland.

As well as increasing supply capacity, the Government is implementing a range of demand management strategies to ensure that water is used more efficiently. For residential users, the Home WaterWise Rebate Scheme provides generous rebates for the purchase and installation of water-efficient shower heads and washing machines, dual-flush toilets, rainwater tanks, swimming pool covers and greywater systems. As at 6 June 2007, a total of \$67.96 million has been provided in rebates to the people of Queensland. The Home Garden WaterWise Rebate Scheme assists in the purchase of defined garden plants and products that save water. Of the stated total rebate figure, as at 6 June 2007, \$138,171 has been provided in rebates for garden products. In South East Queensland, residents have also been able to take advantage of the Home WaterWise Service in which plumbers visit homes to fix leaky taps, install efficient shower heads and complete a water audit for a small fee.

The Government has directed all water service providers to prepare System Leakage Management Plans to minimise losses via leakage from ageing distribution infrastructure. In South East Queensland, significant funds have been invested in a leakage and pressure management project with the aim of saving 60 million litres of water per day by 2008.

On the rural front, the Rural Water Use Efficiency Initiative and the Great Artesian Basin Sustainability Initiative have been successful partnerships between Government and rural industries to save almost 300,000 million litres each year.

In 2004, the Government became a signatory to the national water reform agreement – the National Water Initiative – to progress water planning and management, water trading and water pricing. The Water Resource Planning Program is integral to the sustainable management of water in the State. It provides a sustainable framework for further development of the State's water resources as demand for water increases, while also providing for environmental flow requirements. To date approximately 74% of the State, covering 17 basins, has a finalised Water Resource Plan in place, with a further 17.5% of the State being progressed. Resource Operations Plans which implement Water Resource Plans are also finalised in nine basins.

The Government is planning for growth and the potential impact of climate change on a regional basis by developing regional water supply strategies in key parts of the State. These strategies project future demand over a fifty-year time frame in the rural, urban and industrial sectors, and develop preferred supply options from traditional (e.g. groundwater, dams and weirs) and non-traditional (e.g. recycling, stormwater harvesting and desalination) sources. Demand management and a reduction in system losses, as well as reviewing the institutional arrangements for delivering water, are also significant components of this work.

The Government's water strategy is comprehensive and addresses all aspects of water as a resource for economic development and the natural

environment. Significant funding and human resources are being invested to sustain and manage Queensland's water resources, well into the twenty-first century.