QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 334

asked on Wednesday, 12 March 2008

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

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide to the House an update on the Paradise Dam?

ANSWER:

Paradise Dam is proving its critics wrong with record water levels, a big increase in allocations for irrigators and a good environmental record.

This dam, which opened in the worst drought on record, has been unfairly attacked on a number of issues.

Paradise Dam on the Burnett River near Biggenden, is now making the critics drink their words.

Paradise Dam is owned by Burnett Water Pty Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of SunWater, and the Dam is operated by SunWater. Paradise Dam was completed in December 2005, and has a 300 000 megalitres capacity which provides 144 000 megalitres of annual yield (or total allocation) for use by the agricultural, urban and industrial sectors. In recent times, there have been significant inflows into the Dam and its water level is currently at 45% holding approximately 135 366 megalitres of water. This water level has increased from 16% in January 2008.

Paradise Dam is delivering much needed water to farms and industry. Following good inflows into the Bundaberg Water Supply Scheme in January and February this year, the announced allocation for medium priority water allocations purchased from Burnett Water Pty Ltd jumped from 24% to 100% in the Burnett Sub Scheme and from 47% to 100% in the Kolan Sub Scheme.

The announced allocation for water users within both sub schemes of the Bundaberg Water Supply Scheme, who held medium priority water entitlements before Paradise Dam was built saw their allocations increase to 81%.

The announced allocation for all high priority water allocations in the scheme increased from 85% to 100%.

SunWater has advised my Department of Natural Resources and Water that given the recent improved level of storage, it has increased its marketing

activities. This has resulted in significant interest in the total allocation of 144 000 megalitres that is available from Paradise Dam.

I also am advised by SunWater that a recent Commonwealth Government Audit of Paradise Dam has confirmed the dam is complying with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.

Paradise Dam has a fishway system to allow upstream fish migration and this is working well with recent monitoring finding 112,000 fish were collected over seven days.

The audit found the downstream fishway could not transfer fish due to low dam levels – it was 9% at the time the audit was carried out. The audit report recognised that low water levels in the Dam due to the long-running drought had consequently resulted in the Dam's downstream fishway not being operational and that the downstream fishway would be fully functional when the dam reached 57% capacity.

It is clear that this storage will deliver growth for the region. I am very pleased with its encouraging performance, especially over the past few months.