Question on Notice
No. 384
Asked on Thursday, 13 March 2008

QUESTION:

MR WEIGHTMAN asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) — Will the Minister report on the progress of the cloud seeding project being conducted across South East Queensland?

ANSWER:

Cloud seeding research was one of the key project initiatives of the Queensland Government in establishing the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence as part of the Office of Climate Change.

$7.6 million will be invested to scientifically evaluate the potential of cloud seeding to increase rainfall and associated water storage in Wivenhoe and Somerset dams.

Cloud seeding is one of the many options being investigated by the Queensland Government to increase water security in south east Queensland.

I must stress that this is a research project to determine whether cloud seeding will be effective in south east Queensland.

The cloud forming conditions, the topography and the level of aerosols in the atmosphere in the catchments may or may not be suitable for future operational cloud seeding. The research results will confirm this.

The field work for the project commenced in December 2007 with the arrival of the cloud seeding research aircraft which is contracted through the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research in the United States.

The second cloud seeding operations aircraft, which complements the research program, arrived in early January 2008. This aircraft is supplied under a joint contract with the Brisbane company MIPD Pty Ltd and the US-based Weather Modification Inc.

The project provides scientific expertise in areas such as cloud and rain-forming physics, radar technology and cloud seeding research.

The Queensland project is one of the first cloud seeding research projects in the world that has access to both research aircraft instrumentation and the CP2 radar technology at the Bureau of Meteorology's Redbank Plains facility. A significant amount of research data has now been collected for the region and is being analysed by the team.

We will need further data analysis and an ongoing field program to verify the early positive indications.

It is anticipated that next year's program will include a research aircraft with field operations between October and December 2008.

Other members of the Scientific Advisory Committee include the Bureau of Meteorology, CSIRO, Monash University and the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence.

While the Scientific Advisory Group is cautiously optimistic about the trial outcome, it is too early to comment on the viability of longer term cloud seeding in the region.