

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 594

asked on Tuesday, 29 April 2008

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

### QUESTION:

Would the Minister highlight recent increases in allocations from the Mid Brisbane River Irrigators in South East Queensland?

### ANSWER:

In South East Queensland much of the public focus on the effects of the drought has been on our urban areas and the restrictions residents have faced.

There has been less attention given to the many SEQ irrigators who have been significantly impacted by drought over the past three to four years.

In SEQ, irrigators have faced streams that ceased to flow, diminishing groundwater reserves or low water levels in our dams.

The Department of Natural Resources and Water has also had to make difficult decisions to further restrict access by irrigators to protect urban water supplies.

Water restrictions for Mid Brisbane River irrigators were eased on 1 April 2008, due to rain earlier in the year.

Recent inflows into Wivenhoe, Somerset and North Pine Dams lifted the combined storage levels to around 38%, enabling some restrictions to be reviewed by my Department of Natural Resources and Water.

Approximately 130 irrigators are located in the Mid Brisbane reach, between Mt Crosby Weir and Wivenhoe Dam. These irrigators were restricted to 25% of their usual water allocation for the 12 month period ending 31 March 2008.

The easing of restrictions will allow irrigators to access 50% of their usual water allocations for the current water year, which began on 1 April 2008.

Irrigators will be required to continue to maintain and submit water use log books to the Department each month.

Water from the Mid Brisbane River area is used for fodder, pasture, grain, small crops and turf farms.

Varying water restrictions in the Mid Brisbane River area, as well as other parts of South East Queensland, have been in place over the last three years as a response to the drought.

I recognise that irrigators have been through a very difficult period and I have ensured that my Department eased restrictions as soon as possible, so that farmers can plan ahead and take advantage of the recent rains.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Mid Brisbane irrigators for their responsible approach to water use, during the drought.

When dam levels reach 50%, restrictions for Mid Brisbane River irrigators will be reviewed again.

The Bligh Government will continue to work with irrigators, and all water users, to ensure a fair and transparent process is in place to manage this precious resource.