Question on Notice
No. 92
Asked on Thursday, 14 February 2008

QUESTION:

MRS SULLIVAN asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) — Will he advise what progress is being made in the Queensland Government's cloud seeding trial?

ANSWER:

The Cloud Seeding Research Project is designed to determine scientifically whether cloud seeding is able to increase rainfall in South-East Queensland and in particular, the potential to increase water storage in Wivenhoe and Somerset dams. The target clouds are convective clouds in the summer season, around November to March. The project is led by the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence (part of the Office of Climate Change), and partners with the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO through the new Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research (CAWCR), the University of Southern Queensland and Monash University.

The two key project contractors are the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (USA) and a joint venture between Weather Modification Inc (USA) and MIPD Pty Ltd (Aus).

Atmospheric trials with a research aircraft commenced prior to Christmas 2007 and the program has been fully operational since the arrival of the seeding aircraft in mid-January this year. The major centre of operations is the Bureau of Meteorology's CP2 Radar facility at Redbank Plains, along with a leased hangar at Archerfield airport.

It is too early in the trials to comment on the viability of longer term seeding in the region. Almost daily flights have been conducted since mid-January, and a significant amount of data has been captured and is now starting to be analysed. The trials have included hygroscopic, or warm cloud seeding and glaciogenic, or cold cloud seeding techniques - the latter of which is used in Tasmania and as part of the Snowy Mountains scheme on an ongoing basis.

The results of early atmospheric monitoring has impressed our international visitors as South-East Queensland has some of the cleanest air they have witnessed.

South-East Queensland provides a unique opportunity internationally for these trials. The partnerships achieved, and access to infrastructure which that has created, provide the best opportunity ever in the world to scientifically validate and quantify the results of this type of rainfall enhancement. The project team is hopeful of being able to provide some indicative results after the cessation of the current field program in April; although, the success of the

trial is contingent on being able to experience as many diverse weather conditions as possible, meaning at least further trials in the 2008/2009 wet season.

Cloud seeding is recognised as a technique with the potential to enhance rainfall yield in “good” years; it is not a drought-breaker. It is hoped that the trials will provide evidence that seeding will positively contribute to long-term water management strategies in enhancing run-off to storages during rain events and thus increasing water supplies for the inevitable next dry period.