

Question on Notice

No. 1740

Asked on 11 November 2009

MR SEENEY asked the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning (Mr HINCHLIFFE) –

QUESTION:

Will the Minister advise what the government is currently doing to advance the Nathan Dam project and what progress has been made towards making this project a reality?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Callide for his question.

Nathan Dam was identified in the *Central Queensland Regional Water Supply Strategy 2006* as a water supply option for emerging mining, urban and industrial development demands in the upper Dawson Valley and the Surat Basin.

In July 2007, SunWater was designated as the proponent to progress the Nathan Dam project through to completion of a business case.

A ‘Program of Works’, which included the proposed Nathan Dam, was approved under the *State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971* (SDPWO Act) on 13 December 2007. A Program of Works enlivens the Coordinator-General’s powers.

On the 11 September 2009, I approved the transfer of the governance arrangements for the eleven Regional Water Projects under the Program of Works from the Department of Infrastructure and Planning to the Department of Environment and Resource Management. The Department of Infrastructure and Planning will continue to manage the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

The project was declared a significant project requiring an EIS under the SDPWO Act on 2 May 2008 and was also determined to be a ‘controlled action’ under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) on 30 July 2008.

The draft terms of reference for the EIS were released on 13 September 2008 for public and advisory agency comment, and finalised on 13 February 2009.

The Boggomoss Snail, listed as a ‘critically endangered’ species under the EPBC Act, was found within the impoundment area for the proposed Nathan Dam. Therefore,

the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment Heritage and the Arts would need to approve any action that may have a negative impact on the Boggomoss Snail.

A more recent and extensive survey commissioned by SunWater discovered an additional eight sites supporting Boggomoss Snail populations, all downstream of Mount Rose Station. The total snail population is now estimated to be approximately 18 000.

On the basis of this new information, it has become apparent that the Mount Rose population is not critical to the long term survival of the Boggomoss Snail. Consequently, on the 5 November 2009, Commonwealth Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts approval was given to proceed with the full EIS process. It is anticipated that the EIS may be available for public comment in around late 2010.

As SunWater develops its business case for Nathan Dam, it is also in close consultation with proponents of the Surat Basin LNG projects about options for management of treated water to be sourced from coal seam gas well development. It is likely that strategies for the management of coal seam water will impact upon any planning for the potential construction of Nathan Dam.