

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 463

asked on 7 June 2013

MR COX ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND WATER SUPPLY (MR MCARDLE)—

QUESTION:

How is the Newman Government supporting irrigators through local management of channel irrigation schemes?

ANSWER:

The government considers that with the right arrangements in place, the best long-term future for SunWater's eight channel irrigation schemes lies in local management. The government is committed to working with the relevant stakeholders, especially irrigators in the schemes, to find a way to make local management work. That commitment has been affirmed by the government's response to the final report of the Queensland Commission of Audit. Consequently, the government has invited irrigators to put forward proposals which demonstrate how these schemes would be operated and managed under local ownership.

The government has provided funding to help irrigators to develop their business proposals. This funding will pay for:

- grants to remunerate irrigator chairs and boards to develop these proposals;
- a project team, independent from government, which will assist irrigators with engineering, legal, financial and taxation advice; and
- the development of a financial model to help irrigators to understand the potential revenues and costs for these irrigator businesses.

The project team will also assist the irrigators in deciding corporate matters such as staffing requirements.

An independent local industry working group has also been established, headed by irrigator and National Water Commissioner Leith Boully, to allow a whole-of-industry perspective to be brought in relation to technical and policy issues as they arise during the proposal. Members of the working group include Queensland Farmers' Federation, Canegrowers, Growcom and Cotton Australia.

This investigatory phase is about local communities and irrigators carrying out the necessary due diligence and business planning to demonstrate how these schemes could be transferred to viable, long-term local businesses that strongly contribute to the Newman Government's vision of building agriculture as one of the four pillars of the economy.