

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 882

asked on Friday, 15 June 2018

MR C BOYCE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY (HON DR A LYNHAM)—

QUESTION:

With reference to falling water levels at Boondooma Dam, leading to irrigators at Mundubbera expecting their irrigation water supplies to be cut off in approximately August 2018, if there is no significant inflows—

Will the Minister advise what the government is going to address this problem and protect the \$100m fruit industry at Mundubbera?

ANSWER:

The status of Boondooma Dam is closely monitored by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, as well as SunWater as the dam operator.

This region and its precious water resources are important as they sustain high-value agriculture production, and provide water supply security for South Burnett Regional Council's town water supplies and for Stanwell's energy generation at Tarong Power Station.

Boondooma Dam was purpose built as the primary source of water for Tarong Power Station which is critical to the security of electricity supply in Queensland and, therefore, must have access to a secure water supply.

Water allocations from Boondooma Dam are managed under a SunWater Resource Operations Licence which sets out the rules for sharing the available water for high-priority and medium-priority allocations in the scheme.

Stanwell is a high-priority water user and pays a higher price for its water allocation to guarantee security of supply. Medium-priority water users (including irrigators) pay a lower price for their water allocation on the premise that it is known to have a lower reliability.

On my instructions, representatives of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy met with the North Burnett Regional Council and Boyne River irrigators on 6 July 2018. The aim of the meeting was to get a better understanding of the individual water supply circumstances of growers and to develop a way forward together with council and SunWater.

SunWater has been working closely with irrigators since the start of the year to ensure they remain well informed about available water supply during these challenging conditions and to look at ways to maximise water efficiency.

Ultimately, this is a complex situation which needs a collaborative strategy to balance water supply, cost and energy security. SunWater and Stanwell are active participants in the discussion about short and long-term solutions.