

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 120

asked on Thursday, 6 February 2020

MS A LEAHY ASKED THE MINISTER FOR NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY (HON DR A LYNHAM)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline the level of assistance being provided to the local governments who are incurring additional expenses to provide drinking water to those communities whose supplies are insufficient to supply their communities (reported separately by council)?

ANSWER:

While it is the responsibility of water service providers, which are often local governments, to provide safe and secure water supplies for their communities, the Palaszczuk Government has made significant commitments to support local governments whose town water supply schemes have been adversely impacted by drought, and to ensure no Queensland community is without drinking water.

In September 2019, the government committed up to \$15 million to facilitate carting to preserve continuity of the town water supply for Stanthorpe (including around \$2 million for infrastructure and about \$800,000 a month for carting). Southern Downs Regional Council is also making drinking water available to residents not serviced by the town's reticulation through its standpipes. Other support for town water supplies that the Queensland Government has provided to council includes approximately:

- \$445,000 for new bores
- \$500,000 for leak detections and repairs
- \$4 million for the Storm King Dam pipeline upgrade
- \$2.5 million towards the pipeline for recycled water from the Warwick treatment centre to Warwick estates.

The Queensland Government has also committed \$13.6 million to kick-off Emu Swamp, including advancing \$6 million essential funding to progress the project, as requested by Granite Belt water which continues to wait for any money from the federal government. Additionally, the November 2019 announcement of funding of \$1 million towards a feasibility study into a contingency water supply for Warwick was followed by a further announcement on 20 January 2020, showing the government's commitment to using its authority to "get the project moving ASAP".

The Southern Downs Regional Council is the only local government to formally seek funding support for water supply contingency measures during this drought.

Regular contact is maintained with all councils, particularly those worst affected by the drought. While there has been welcome rain across parts of Queensland, working closely with affected service providers is critical in keeping the government informed so it can respond to the developing issues with town water supplies where the drought continues.

There are a number of communities with some residents not connected to a reticulation network and with responsibility for maintaining their own water supply. It is a council decision as to what, if any, assistance is provided to these 'off-network' residents. If local government funding was required to support these residents, this would be a matter to be directed to my colleague, the Minister for Local Government, Minister for Racing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.