

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 30

asked on 23 February 2021

MR S BENNETT ASKED THE MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURING AND MINISTER FOR WATER (HON G BUTCHER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the uncertainty around the storage capacity of Paradise Dam and Sunwater's own forecasts predicting capacity could be as critically low as 8 percent by June 2021 without significant rainfall which will leave growers in the Burnett with no means of irrigating sugarcane, macadamias, mangoes and avocados and small crops—

Will the Minister commit to repairing, replacing or restoring Paradise Dam to its full capacity as a matter of urgency?

ANSWER:

Rainfalls across Queensland and New South Wales in recent days has seen some relief with some 10,000 megalitres of flow into Paradise Dam. The water level in the dam is now sitting at 33.4 per cent of its current capacity (as at 24 March 2021). Sunwater is in the process of reviewing announced allocations for the current water year. It is too early to speculate on the announced allocations for the 2021/22 water year.

As detailed to the House during my ministerial statement on 10 March 2021:

The current water levels in Paradise Dam are attributable to the absence of rain and, as a consequence, there have been lower inflows into the dam. Even if the dam was restored to full capacity tomorrow, this would not automatically result in more water into the dam. Only rain has that effect.

Sunwater's essential works to lower and recap the spillway of Paradise Dam are now complete, improving the safety of the residents of Bundaberg. These measures have reduced the risk of dam failure, but more work is required to bring it to an acceptable level of safety in the long-term.

Building Queensland, Sunwater and the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water are continuing to develop a detailed business case to identify the best way forward for fixing Paradise Dam and I anticipate the Queensland Government will be able to make a decision on the best long-term option later this year.

We will not rush and cut corners. The safety of those surrounding the dam and the longer term water needs of the Bundaberg and Burnett region, depend on getting this important work right.