

## QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1488

asked on 16 November 2023

---

**MRS D FRECKLINGTON** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURING AND MINISTER FOR WATER (HON G BUTCHER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Federal Labor Government's Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023 and the impact it will have on Queensland—

Will the Minister advise (a) what modelling the State has completed, and when, on the impact these legislative changes will have on (i) Queenslanders' access to, and cost of water, (ii) the economic and social impact to communities, (iii) cost of fruit and vegetables, if the Bill is passed and (b) what representations he has made on behalf of Queensland?

ANSWER:

- a) The Water Amendment (Restoring Our Rivers) Bill 2023 (the Bill) was passed by the Australian Parliament on 30 November 2023. The Queensland Government will work with the Australian Government, as we have always done, to ensure any potential socio-economic impacts to Queensland communities are considered and mitigated. Amendments made during the deliberative process will ensure the Australian Government Water Minister considers the social and economic impact of initiatives on communities in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Water prices for Queensland farmers, including farmers in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin, are determined following a rigorous process led by the Queensland Competition Authority with extensive engagement with irrigators.

The Queensland Government's support for meeting its Murray-Darling Basin Plan obligations has no impact on water prices in supplemented schemes. In fact, eligible growers in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin are receiving 15 per cent irrigation price discounts until 30 June 2025. Eligible horticulture growers are also receiving an additional 35 per cent discount on irrigation prices in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin until 30 June 2024, thanks to the Queensland Government.

Supplemented water availability is driven by water supply scheme performance and, in the case of unsupplemented entitlements, water availability is opportunity based and driven by catchment runoff due to rainfall. Both resources are managed under provisions in the relevant Water Plan.

- b) The Queensland Government will continue to advocate for our state's interests as part of ongoing discussions with the Australian Government in light of the Bill being passed. As Water Minister, I have always advocated strongly to the Australian Government that environmental outcomes must be balanced with the socio-economic interests of communities.

Queensland is an active member of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council, which is supported by representation at the Basin Officials Committee. Both forums are important platforms to advocate for Queensland's regional communities when it comes to Basin Plan implementation. Representations have also been made to the Australian Government to advocate for Queensland's Murray-Darling Basin communities and key agricultural stakeholders.