



SEATH HOLSWICH MP – STATE MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE – ESTIMATES HEARING

10th October 2012

QUEENSLAND FLOODS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Mr HOLSWICH: Minister, I refer to page 4 of the SDS where it states that you have significantly progressed the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry recommendations. I also refer to allegations in some media outlets regarding the veracity of the United States Army Corps of Engineers review of the flood event. How do questions about this review progress or otherwise the floods inquiry recommendations?

Mr McARDLE: I do thank the member for the question. One of the key recommendations in the final report of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry was that an independent and appropriately qualified person complete a review of Seqwater's report for the January 2011 flood event at Wivenhoe and Somerset dams before the 2012-13 wet season. This recommendation is recommendation 16.3 of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry's final report.

Following an extensive search, the Department of Energy and Water Supply engaged world-leading dam institutions, the United States Bureau of Reclamation and the United States Army Corps of Engineers to jointly conduct a review. The independent review has charged a total of \$167,815.40 or US\$168,000 including all of their fees, costs and outlays. The Department of Energy and Water Supply had set aside up to \$500,000 to complete this review. The United States Army Corps of Engineers, which manages a portfolio of almost 700 dams, provided expertise in flood operations and the Bureau of Reclamation, which operates 358 dams, provided dam safety expertise.

The independent review was completed on 22 September 2012 and has, overall, supported the decision making of Seqwater's engineers who operated Wivenhoe and Somerset dams during the January 2011 floods. The independent review has described the operational decisions as prudent and demonstrating appropriate engineering judgment. The report does make recommendations for changes to the flood mitigation manual, as well as a number of dam safety related recommendations, none of which are considered urgent. The Department of Energy and Water Supply and Seqwater are assessing the report's recommendations to identify implementation priorities for this wet season.

Conducting the review, the engineers from the United States Corps of Engineers visited Brisbane and toured Wivenhoe and Somerset dams and the flood operation centre key sites within the Brisbane River catchment, and held meetings with flood engineers, flood officers and the dam safety regulator. A draft review report was provided to affected parties to meet procedural fairness requirements and written responses were provided to the independent reviewers prior to the finalisation of the review. The report of the independent reviewers was publicly released soon after it was received by the government and is publicly available on my department's website. The Department of Energy and Water supply will continue to implement the recommendations of the Floods Commission of Inquiry to better prepare this state for future flood events.

I am acutely aware that many people went and are still going through an enormous amount of emotional and other pain because of the flood that occurred in 2011. I have put in place a procedure that should crystallise, this week or next week, whereby I will assess whether or not the water in the dams should be lowered. We are doing that are two reasons. Certainly we are entering into the period of the wet season. Although the forecasts indicate we will not have the rain events we have had in the past two years, I think it is prudent to undertake that step. Secondly, it is also important that as a government we take steps to assure people who have been through these very traumatic times that we are taking all reasonable steps to ensure their safety. When that report becomes available to me, further action will or will not take place based on the content of that report.