

CTS No. 19311/10

Department of Environment and Resource Management  
MINISTERIAL BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Minister for Natural Resources and Energy and Minister for Trade

RECEIVED  
MINISTERIAL OFFICE  
22 OCT 2010

Advisor	OR
Dated	22/10/10
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Approved <input type="radio"/> Not Approved <input type="radio"/> Noted	
Further Information required	
Minister	[Signature]
Dated	25/10/10

SUBJECT: Managing Flood Impacts Downstream of Large Water Supply Dams

<input type="checkbox"/> MINISTER <input type="checkbox"/> POL ADV <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIA ADV <input type="checkbox"/> PARL SEC <input type="checkbox"/> ADMIN
--

TIMEFRAME

- Approval of this brief is required by 29 October 2010 to enable prompt action to be taken on this matter.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Minister:

- sign the letter to the SEQ Grid Manager (Attachment 1) requesting him to consider options to pre-emptively reduce dam water levels to help manage low-level, downstream flood impacts. (A draft media release forms Attachment 2)
- sign the letter (Attachment 3) to Director-General, Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM), requesting him to initiate action to remind the owners of large water supply dams about their obligations to provide advice to communities downstream of their dams about flood flows through them.
- note the draft letter (Attachment 4) from the dam safety regulator in DERM to dam owners regarding the previous points.

BACKGROUND

*Letter to the SEQ Grid Manager*

The main SEQ water supply dams have reached their full capacity, for water supply purposes. As their catchments are saturated, even quite minor rainfall events will result in water releases. A large number of minor rainfall events are anticipated between now and the end of the 2011 wet season, in early April 2011.

As these water releases will usually co-incide with local flooding (due to the rain event generating the release) downstream of the dam. These low-level flood events inconvenience a range of people, particularly those who need to access their properties over low-level crossings that traverse these streams/rivers.

Accordingly, it is suggested you request the SEQ Grid Manager to investigate the option of making small releases from these water supply dams to reduce the number of incidents resulting in low-level flooding impacts. (Preliminary advice from the Grid Manager is that such a strategy will not adversely affect water supply security).

*Letter to the Director-General*

With the exception of Wivenhoe, North Pine and Somerset Dams that have special flood management arrangements, other large water supply dams, once full; basically "pass through" the floodwaters that flow into them.

Author Name: Bob Reilly Position: GM(OWSR) Tel No: [Redacted] Date: 22 October 2010	Cleared by Name: Bob Reilly Position: GM(OWSR) Tel No: [Redacted]	Cleared by Name: Position: Tel No:	Recommended: Name: John Bradley Director-General, DERM Tel No: [Redacted] Date:
	Name: Dean Ellwood Position: ADG(ENRR) Tel No:	Name: Position: Tel No:	

However, the local governments responsible for the communities downstream of the dams, can reasonably expect that dam owners will tell them about the volumes of floodwater flowing through their dams.

The dam safety regulator, DERM, requires the owners of large water supply dams to have, and keep current, Emergency Action Plans. Amongst other matters, these plans set out the notification protocols for local governments (and other emergency management agencies) in the event of significant floods (basically those that will impact on buildings).

DERM does not approve these plans, or review their content. Nor is it involved in the negotiations between dam owners and local government/emergency management organisations in the development of these plans.

## CURRENT ISSUES

### *SEQ Grid Manager Letter*

Given the water security situation, it is desirable to minimise the low-level flooding impacts typically associated with minor rainfall events, where practical.

### *Letter to the Director-General*

Given the likelihood of above average floods during the 2011 wet season, it is important that the Emergency Action Plans are current.

## RESOURCE/IMPLEMENTATION IMPLICATIONS

- The SEQ Grid manager will advise of any financial implications associated with the proposal contained in your letter to him.
- There were no resource issues for DERM.

## PROPOSED ACTION

- The two letters will give effect to the commitments being given to Cabinet on 25 October 2010, by yourself, on these matters.

## OTHER INFORMATION

- *Consultation:* The SEQ Grid Manager (Dan Spiller) has been consulted and supports the proposed action contained in your letter to the Grid Manager.
- *Legislation:* NA

## MINISTER'S COMMENTS

### ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Letter to SEQ Grid Manager
- Attachment 2 – Letter to D-G, DERM
- Attachment 3 – Letter to Dam Owners

<b>Author</b> Name: Bob Reilly Position: GM(OWSR) Tel No: [REDACTED] Date: 22 October 2010	<b>Cleared by</b> Name: Bob Reilly Position: GM(OWSR) Tel No: [REDACTED]	<b>Cleared by</b> Name: Position: Tel No:	<b>Recommended:</b> Name: John Bradley Director-General, DERM Tel No: [REDACTED] Date:
	Name: Dean Ellwood Position: ADG(ENRR) Tel No:	Name: Position: Tel No:	

**DRAFT ONLY**

**SEQ Water Grid prepares for summer big wet**

The Minister for Natural Resources Stephen Robertson MP today announced measures to configure the Grid for improved flood mitigation in preparation for a forecast bigger than usual wet season.

Our water supply is now more secure than ever before. The Grid 12 are at 100 per cent of storage capacity, going into the traditional wet season with forecasts of higher than median rainfall and the prospect of multiple flood events.

With this security, we have the opportunity to make sure we are prepared as possible for the prospect of minor and major flooding.

Recent heavy rains which saw a flood water volume the size of Sydney Harbour – or the equivalent to 122,000 Olympic sized swimming pools – added to and released safely from Wivenhoe Dam in less than 7 days.

Minister Robertson said that while Wivenhoe is designed to handle even more water, it was prudent to consider options to increase the dam's storage compartment for the coming season. This would be achieved by temporarily decreasing its drinking water storage capacity.

“Wivenhoe Dam no longer stands alone. Because the dams are full and we've hooked them up across the Grid, we can actually rely on Wivenhoe Dam less for drinking water and more for flood mitigation which gives us a powerful advantage.”

“Let's remember, Wivenhoe Dam was built to hold back flood water from Brisbane and Ipswich. This temporary move may give it even more capacity to help keep us dry, just in case we really get a huge season.” Mr Robertson said.

At the very least, we expect it to reduce the frequency and duration of major dam releases, which flood crossings near the dam – isolating some residents and significantly inconveniencing others.

The operation of North Pine and Leslie Harrison dams will also be reviewed. At least for Leslie Harrison Dam, this would be a return to standard operating procedures prior to the drought, when the dam was routinely drawn down to 95 per cent of capacity to minimise the impacts of storms on downstream residents.

We have analysed water security for South East Queensland over five years, taking into account differing levels of flows and demand. Our analysis indicates that lowering the combined storage level of Grid 12 storages to 95 per cent of capacity presents a low risk of adversely effecting regional or sub-regional water security.

Seqwater and the Water Grid Manager are reviewing the operations of the dams and will provide detailed advice on the changes to operations for this summer.

Mr Robertson emphasised that this is only a temporary measure, reflecting that dams are full.

Mr Robertson also announced that the \$395 million upgrade of Hinze Dam remains on track to be completed by the end of year, providing much improved flood protection for parts of the Gold Coast.

“While we have all been focussed on water security, the improved flood management capacity is every bit as important.”

“South East Queensland has a water grid for all seasons not just for drought. Being able to move water means an unprecedented level of management to direct and control our water supplies. These prudent decisions simply reflect the Grid’s world class ability to respond to a changing environment in the interest of all South east Queenslanders.”

Ends

File/Ref CTS 19311/10

To the Dam Owner  
[Reply Address]  
[SUBURB STATE POSTCODE]

Dear Sir/Madam

It is important that local governments (and other emergency management organisations) responsible for communities downstream of your dam(s), are aware of significant flood events that might pass through them.

To assist in the regard, you are required under dam safety condition DS13 to have, and keep current, an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) for each of the following dam(s):

INSERT LIST

I seek your written confirmation, by 30 November 2010, that the(se) EAP(s) are current.

Please contact me on [REDACTED] if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely

Peter Allen  
Director (Dam Safety)  
Office of the Water Supply Regulator

Queensland 4 Australia

Telephone + 61 7

Facsimile + 61 7

Website [www.derm.qld.gov.au](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au)

ABN 46 640 294 485



Queensland  
Government

Ref CTS 19311/10

25 OCT 2010

Mr J Bradley  
Director-General  
Department of Environment and Resource Management  
GPO Box 2454  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Office of the  
Minister for Natural Resources,  
Mines and Energy and  
Minister for Trade

Dear Mr Bradley

It is important that the local governments (and other emergency management organisations) responsible for communities located downstream of large water supply dams, are aware of significant flood events that pass through those dams.

I understand that the Department of Environment and Resource Management in its role as dam safety regulator requires the owners of these dams to have, and keep current Emergency Action Plans. Amongst other matters, these plans deal with the matters referred to in the previous paragraph.

I request that you arrange for the relevant dam owners to be contacted and provide you with an assurance that their Emergency Action Plans are current.

I note that the owner of the three flood mitigation dams, namely Wivenhoe, North Pine and Somerset will not be asked to do this, as separate flood management arrangements apply to these dams.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP

Rec'd - ODG

25 OCT 2010

Level 17  
61 Mary Street Brisbane 4000  
PO Box 15216 City East  
Queensland 4002 Australia

Telephone

Facsimile

Email

ABN 65 959 415 158