

WATER CORPORATION — GRASS PATCH DAM

1453. Hon COLIN de GRUSSA to the minister representing the Minister for Water:

I refer to answers to questions without notice 1363 and 1324 asked last week about Grass Patch Dam.

- (1) On what basis or criteria is a minimum water level designated for a dam?
- (2) Why does the dam no longer meet the quality standards required for supply of drinking water by the Water Corporation?
- (3) What danger occurs when the water level in the dam is below “its minimum safe level”?
- (4) Given the water in the dam is simply being left to evaporate, will the minister now make the dam available for locals in desperate need of stock water?

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:

I thank the member for the question. The Minister for Water has provided the following answer.

- (1) The minimum water level is set by the Water Corporation on a dam-by-dam basis, giving consideration to the construction methodology of the dam. Grass Patch Dam has been constructed utilising a natural clay lining that is impervious to water, and this is how the dam retains water. In order to protect this lining from damage, the Water Corporation has estimated a minimum volume that is required in order to ensure that the dam retains some water, taking into account likely evaporation losses over coming months.

Hon Colin Holt interjected.

Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN: It is a very good answer, actually. The answer continues —

- (2) In March 2013, under a Liberal–National government, the decision was made to cease using the dam to supply local drinking water due to water quality concerns by the Water Corporation. The Water Corporation is required to ensure that any water that it supplies to its customers meets the very stringent standards determined by the Department of Health. These standards closely reflect the Australian drinking water guidelines, which are generally accepted as the minimum standard for Australian water utilities. The Water Corporation has determined that the water provided by Grass Patch Dam is no longer able to meet the Department of Health’s standards due to the difficulty in protecting the source from contamination.
- (3) The risk is that the current dry conditions continue to prevail in the Grass Patch area and the remaining water will evaporate completely. This would leave the dam lining exposed, causing it to dry out and crack, rendering it ineffective and preventing it from holding water effectively in the future.
- (4) No. This would prevent the dam from holding water effectively in the future. If farmers in the Grass Patch area are concerned about water availability for stock, they should liaise with the shire and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order! If members do not like the length of the response, perhaps they might rethink the length of their questions.