

WATER FOR FOOD PROGRAM — SOUTHERN FORESTS IRRIGATION SCHEME

**265. Hon COLIN TINCKNELL to the Minister for Agriculture and Food:**

I refer to the southern forests irrigation scheme and the Water for Food program. My question is C154. I gave the minister the question a few weeks ago.

- (1) Can the minister confirm that page 43 of the 2016 “Infrastructure audit” published by the former Department of Regional Development proposed the building of dams of up to two-gigalitre capacity to store an additional 12 gigalitres of water for food in the Warren and Donnelly River catchments?
- (2) Can the minister confirm that the project “Build 2-gigalitre dams in Southern Forests”, estimated to require the state and commonwealth governments’ contribution to infrastructure, is likely to be in the order of \$25 million and that currently the project has evolved to require \$19 million in state contributions and \$40 million in commonwealth contributions?
- (3) Can the minister confirm the “Build 2-gigalitre dams in Southern Forests” referred to an additional 12 gigalitres of water for food, which has a very different meaning from reallocating water intended for self-supply water users producing food in the eight sub-catchments of the Donnelly River and closed to further water licences on 16 November 2017 to favour the southern forests irrigation scheme?

**Hon ALANNAH MacTIERNAN replied:**

I thank the member for the question. I note that the question was asked some weeks ago; if he could just bear that in mind.

- (1) Yes. I understand the original project proposed connecting a number of privately owned dams to neighbouring properties. However, during market sounding and discussion with dam and landowners it was clear that potential water suppliers were not willing to enter into long-term contracts with their neighbours to make water available on a commercial basis. I am advised that under the former government, a ministerial steering committee comprising the Ministers for Water, Regional Development, and Agriculture and Food agreed to re-scope the project to the current southern forests irrigation scheme.
- (2) I am advised that the \$25 million was a pre-feasibility cost estimate that did not include the cost of the dams and associated infrastructure.
- (3) No. Both projects relied on the same water resource with the aim of maximising economic growth in the region and providing greater water security for the agricultural sector while still ensuring appropriate environmental water provisions.