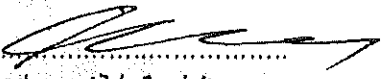


CTS No. [CTS No]

Department of Environment and Resource Management
DIRECTOR-GENERAL BRIEFING NOTE

Approved	Not Approved	Noted
Further information required		
DG:		
Dated	17/2/11	

TO: Director-General

SUBJECT: Seqwater Revised Interim Program (Sect 13 - Moreton ROP): Arrangements for Releasing Water from Wivenhoe Dam

TIMEFRAME

- This brief was requested by the Director General for urgent approval.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Director-General:

- Note that Seqwater has submitted, under section 13(6a) of the Moreton Resource Operations Plan 2009 (Moreton ROP), a revised Interim Program for Central Brisbane River and Stanley River Water Supply Schemes (Attachment 1)
- Consider the implications associated with the proposed interim operating arrangements for releasing water from Wivenhoe Dam that are detailed in the revised Interim Program; and if the Director-General agrees -
- Approve the revised Interim Program without conditions; and
- Sign the attached letter to Seqwater advising of the approval of the revised Interim Program.

BACKGROUND

- Seqwater is the holder of the Resource Operation Licences (ROLs) for the Central Brisbane River and Stanley River Water Supply Schemes (covering Wivenhoe and Somerset dams).
- On 10 February 2011, Seqwater wrote to the Director-General advising that Seqwater recommended that the Wivenhoe Dam's storage level be temporarily reduced to 75 percent of its Full Supply Level (FSL) in order to temporarily increase its flood mitigation capacity. (Attachment 2). Seqwater premised this recommendation on the following factors:
 - Advice from SEQ Water Grid Manager's to Seqwater (see letter from SEQ Water Grid Manager to Seqwater dated 9 February 2011 – Attachment 3) that it had no objection from a water security perspective to Wivenhoe Dam being drawn down to 75 percent of its FSL and that such a draw down, if temporary, would be unlikely to impact its obligations;
 - Modelling by Seqwater of various potential flood events which confirmed that a reduction in Wivenhoe Dam's storage level to 75 percent of its FSL will provide appreciable flood mitigation measures;
 - The extreme nature of the January 2011 event.
- The severe flooding experienced in the Brisbane River system in January 2011 and the ongoing *La Nina* weather patterns have resulted in Seqwater, the holder of the ROLs, to submit a revised Interim Program for the operation of Wivenhoe Dam.
- The Moreton ROP was amended on 14 February 2011 to allow the holder of a ROL with an Interim Program, approved under section 13 of the Moreton ROP, to submit a revised Interim Program for the chief executive's consideration and approval.
- Consultation:* Extensive consultation has taken place between Seqwater, the SEQ Water Grid Manager and the Department, on behalf the Queensland Government, in determining a strategy for implementing interim arrangements for reducing the risk to Brisbane residents of

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- further flooding that could result under the current La Nina weather pattern.
- Crown Law and Legal Services have also been consulted throughout the process.
- Advice was provided on the proposed release regime and its acceptability from a flood management perspective by Mr Bob Reilly and Mr Peter Allen from the Office of the Water Supply Regulator. Their advice is that Burton's Bridge remains trafficable up to a flow at the bridge of 430 m³/sec. As they understand it, it is the only crossing without an alternative crossing of the Brisbane River. To that extent, there will be alternative routes available for the other crossings that will be inundated at such a release rate.
- *Legislation:* The chief executive has the power under section 13(7) of the Moreton ROP to consider any program submitted by the holder of a resource operations licence (including a revised Interim Program), and may either-
 - Approve the program with or without conditions;
 - Amend and approve the amended program; or
 - Require the resource operations licence holder to submit a revised program.

CURRENT ISSUES

- Seqwater submitted a revised Interim Program for the operation of Wivenhoe Dam on 17 February 2011. Under the program, water that would ordinarily be stored in the dam for future water supplies would be released under the arrangements detailed in Attachment 1. The proposal would effectively reduce the water level in Wivenhoe Dam from 100 percent to 75 percent of the full supply volume.
- Seqwater in support of the application for approval by the Chief Executive of the Interim Program have submitted a covering letter explaining why the Interim Program has been submitted (Attachment 1).
- The proposal will have no immediate impact on water availability for irrigators supplied from Wivenhoe Dam. These irrigators are entitled to take 100 percent of their allocation while ever the combined storage volume of Wivenhoe and Somerset Dams exceeds 50 percent at the start of the water year. Even with the reduced water level in Wivenhoe Dam and if future inflows are below average, irrigators could expect to be able to utilise 100 percent of their allocation for a period of time.
- The Moreton ROP does not regulate the manner in which Wivenhoe Dam is operated to mitigate flooding. The strategy and requirements for operating the dam, including flood mitigation and water releases, are outlined in the Dam Operations Manual. The Manual is approved by the State's Dam Safety Regulator, in accordance with the *Water Supply Act 2008*.
- The water releases proposed under the revised Interim Program would otherwise be contrary to section 72 of the Moreton ROP, which prohibits water from being released unless it is required to supply water under water allocations associated with the schemes or for environmental flow needs. The proposed revised Interim program would override this provision in the Moreton ROP until 1 April 2011.
- Provisions of the Moreton ROP relating to the management of operational releases, monitoring and reporting will apply to the releases that are being authorised under the revised Interim Program.

RESOURCE/IMPLEMENTATION IMPLICATIONS

- There are no implications for the Department in implementing the Moreton ROP associated with the approval of the proposed revised Interim Program for the Central Brisbane River and Stanley River Water Supply Schemes.

PROPOSED ACTION

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- If the Director-General approves the revised Interim Program, the Department will ensure that Seqwater complies with the requirements of section 13(9) of the Moreton ROP, which require the holder to:
 - Implement and operate in accordance with the approved program; and
 - Make public details of the approved program on their internet site.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL'S COMMENTS

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Covering letter from Seqwater with a revised Interim Program for Central Brisbane River and Stanley River Water Supply Schemes;
- Attachment 2: Seqwater letter to Director-General of 10 February 2011;
- Attachment 3: Letter from SEQ Water Grid Manager to Seqwater dated 9 February 2011

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