



MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

Time for Tough Questions about Paradise Dam

Second generation Childers farmer, John Dorrian, is calling on his fellow farmers to start asking more questions when it comes to the future of Paradise Dam.

"There are a lot of long-term farming families in the Bundaberg and Childers region" Mr Dorrian said "who remember their forefathers fighting hard to access a secure supply of irrigation water".

"Many of us grew up with stories of the dryland farming days and we know how hard it was to be a farmer in those days" Mr Dorrian said.

"It's thanks to the tireless efforts of the farmers who came before us that Paradise Dam was built" Mr Dorrian said "After thirty years of our forefathers fighting for a dam on the Burnett River, are we ready to go back to farming without a secure water supply?".

Mr Dorrian was part of the Isis Canegrowers executive in the 1980's and remembers all too well the endless meetings and delegations with government lobbying for a secure irrigation scheme for the district.

"While many Childers farmers started drilling for bores and building on-farm dams in the 1960's and '70's, it wasn't until the irrigation scheme was finished in late 2005 that we really began to appreciate the full benefits of secure water" Mr Dorrian said.

"After the hard-won battle to get the dam built, why aren't local irrigators demanding more answers about the real situation with the wall of Paradise Dam?" Mr Dorrian said.

"The Commission of Inquiry into Paradise Dam raised a lot of questions about the testing that's been done to date" Mr Dorrian said "and the comment from Dr Schrader about the dam being 'almost certainly stable' set off alarm bells for me".

"It begs the question, why if international experts, and acknowledged as such by the Commission, are saying the wall can be fully repaired, is the government determined to reduce the dam's capacity?" Mr Dorrian said "It would seem that the government has over-reacted and at great cost to the regional economy."

Mr Dorrian says the international dam expert commissioned by the Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Cooperative has offered an alternative viewpoint on the stability of the wall.

"I'm very pleased that Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers decided to engage an independent dam expert, Dr Paul Rizzo" Mr Dorrian said "we can't argue against the government's story that the dam is unsafe without the facts to back us up".

Bundaberg Fruit & Vegetables Growers (BFVG) Managing Director, Bree Grima, agrees.

"Any decision about the future of Paradise Dam needs to be based on the facts and we deserve adequate testing that provides this. We need to keep the community safe as well as protect our competitive advantage and economic prosperity of the Region" Ms Grima said.

BFVG have been working tirelessly to demonstrate to government that there may be a better way to repair Paradise Dam, which does not involve lowering the wall. Internationally recognised dam engineer Dr Paul Rizzo of Rizzo International, has publicly stated there are a number of safe and economic options available to repair this type of dam (a Roller-

Compacted Concrete dam) that do not involve any reduction to the height of the dam wall.

Mr Dorrian's son, Matthew, is now the third generation of his family farming in the district. "We employ 44 people on our avocado orchard" Mr Dorrian said "but if water allocations drop because Paradise Dam is lowered, three quarters of those jobs will disappear".

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For comment contact BFGV Managing Director Bree Grima 0403 616 702, or John Dorrian on 0428 266 112