

Media Release

Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers Cooperative Limited (BFVG)

BUNDABERG, QUEENSLAND

Ms Bree Grima, Managing Director

24 February 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

\$2.4 billion cost to Bundaberg economy if Paradise Dam not fixed

Today a consortium of regional advocacy and industry groups released their joint economic report titled “The economic costs of inaction on Paradise Dam”.

Prepared by expert economic advisory firm Adept Economics, the report estimates the cost of inaction on Paradise Dam, to the Bundaberg Region, would be approximately \$2.4 billion over the next 30 years.

This is the potential cost to the Queensland economy of a permanent lowering of Paradise Dam by up to 5 metres.

The report shows that not restoring the Dam wall will comprise future investment and income-generation from high-valued crops, such as macadamias and avocados.

Bree Grima from Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers said: “The report also shows how regional irrigators rely on the certainty of water being available in Paradise Dam into the future before they commit to investments in new tree crops and irrigation infrastructure”.

The \$2.4 billion cost estimate also includes broader economic and social impacts.

Mark Mammino, Chair of Bundaberg’s Irrigation Advisory Committee and Canegrowers Isis explained: “Irrigated agriculture underpins an important economic base for the Bundaberg region including a wide range of employment opportunities. Without action on Paradise Dam, there is a high risk of long-term unemployment and associated social problems such as mental health and financial stress”.

As part of the preparation of the report a survey was commissioned to canvas both irrigated business and non-irrigated business views on the importance of the Paradise Dam.

This survey received nearly 300 responses.

Report Author Gene Tunny said: “This was one of the highest survey responses we have seen and reflects a high level of community concern regarding the potential lowering of Paradise Dam.”

The report also shows that 92 per cent of surveyed growers indicated that Paradise Dam was extremely important to their business, while 76 per cent of non-irrigated businesses indicated the Dam was extremely important to their business.

Bree Grima from Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers said: “In short, growers stated that no water means no crop and no income and that the security of water in Paradise Dam provides the greatest advantage to our regional business sector”.

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Non-irrigated businesses who completed the survey indicated that their turnover is intrinsically linked to grower activity.

The consortium also engaged with Building Queensland, who will soon release their own economic analysis on the impact of lowering Paradise Dam.

“From this, the consortium has been advised that Building Queensland’s analysis regarding future water demand is consistent with the outlook assumed in our report,” a spokesperson said.

Consortium partners who jointly funded the report include;

- Wide Bay Burnett Regional Organisation of Councils
- Regional Development Australia, Wide Bay Burnett
- Canegrowers ISIS Ltd
- Bundaberg Cane Growers
- Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers
- Australian Macadamia Society
- Bundaberg Regional Council

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For further information, contact BFVG on (07) 4153 3007 or visit www.bfvg.com.au.