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***Paradise Dam powers only destroy trust***

The irrigators of Bundaberg are rightfully angry today at the rushed introduction of legislation into Parliament giving the Minister for Water Resources unfettered powers to start demolishing Paradise Dam.

The new powers allow the Minister to give the go ahead to Sunwater to start lowering the dam spillway in March and avoid a number of important council and environmental checks and balances.

“Any good faith the Minister may have built with the local community since a vast amount of water was released last year from the dam without warning has now been lost,” said Growcom CEO David Thomson.

“Decisions that affect the future of an entire region, importantly its economy and its jobs, are coming out from the State Government without consultation or explanation.”

“It is easy to see why so much rumour surrounds these decisions, including the suggestion there’s a hidden agenda to tear down Paradise Dam at all costs.”

Particularly galling for the irrigator community is the timing of this legislation, coming less than a week after an international dam engineering expert had given confidence that there were good prospects for both making the dam safe and returning it to full capacity.

Dr Paul Rizzo had told a packed meeting of concerned residents that not one dam of hundreds built in the same way around the world had ever been known to fail.

He also advised that no dam built the same way with any structural issues had been unable to be repaired and restored to full capacity.

“The Government’s decisions don’t stack up. They’re still waiting on a report from Building Queensland on their options. And clearly they should be welcoming input from other experts. But appear to be ploughing ahead, which is unfathomable,” said Bree Grima, Managing Director of Bundaberg Fruit and Vegetable Growers.

“If the Government is making decisions on evidence that is not yet public, then they must release this information immediately.”

“It’s simply not good enough for the Government to hold an entire community to ransom based on public safety concerns. If the concerns are real then of course they must take action.”

“But as of yet they’ve not produced the proof, while the experience of an international expert has given the community cause to think the risk to public safety has been inflated to serve another agenda.”

**ENDS**

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