



Hon Stephen Robertson MP  
Member for Stretton



Minister for Natural Resources,  
Mines and Energy and Minister  
for Trade

Ref CTS 02587/09

07 APR 2009

Mr N J Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Parliament House  
Cnr Alice and George Streets  
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to your letter of 12 February 2009 to my predecessor, the Honourable Craig Wallace MP, enclosing a copy of Petition No. 1198-09 lodged in the Queensland Legislative Assembly.

The Petition draws to the attention of the House concerns regarding a decision of the former Department of Natural Resources and Water (now the Department of Environment and Resource Management) to discontinue the telephone service at the Riverslea gauging station on the Fitzroy River, and the failure of the department to consult with users of the service.

The Department of Environment and Resource Management maintains a network of stream gauging stations that record stream height and flow volumes for water resource monitoring, management and long term water resource assessment purposes.

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) is the lead agency for the provision of flood warning services. The BoM accesses data from the department, SunWater and local government gauging stations to supplement data from the bureau's network of stream height and rainfall recording stations.

Until 2001, waterworks licence holders with licences endorsed with a passing flow condition were given telephone access to the Riverslea gauging station. This action was to alleviate the need to physically attend nominated reference sites to confirm their entitlement to divert water from the Fitzroy River, subject to flow greater than the passing flow condition specified on their waterworks licence.

The requirement for telephone access to Riverslea ceased in 2001. Entitlement holders were advised of new arrangements where landowners telephoned a recorded message in the department's Rockhampton office, rather than telephone the Riverslea gauging station.

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This arrangement was replaced at the commencement of the Fitzroy Basin Resource Operations Plan in January 2004. This plan set new management rules that included my department faxing messages to individual landowners advising of the commencement and cessation of authorised diversion periods.

Essentially, from 2001 there has been no authorised public telephone access to Riverslea gauging station. The only authorised users of the telephone access system to the stream gauging station at Riverslea since 2001 were SunWater and the BoM.

The department maintains an internet site that provides the public near real time data from approximately 400 stream gauging stations throughout the State. Access to data on the website provides a far superior service to the previously unauthorised telephone access to the Riverslea gauging station information.

On 11 February 2009, my predecessor met with representatives of concerned landholders regarding this matter and decided to provide a telephone access system for the residents within the immediate vicinity of the Riverslea gauging station. This system is unique and additional to the very comprehensive internet system currently provided by departmental gauging stations throughout Queensland. The system is now fully operational and authorised access to it is provided under a licence agreement.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Robertson', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**STEPHEN ROBERTSON MP**