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Jeremy Rockliff, Minister for Primary Industries and Water

New water certainty to give farmers confidence

The Hodgman Liberal Government is committed to reducing red tape to ensure our competitive strengths like agriculture can continue to grow and create jobs.

The construction of dams together with irrigation infrastructure is critical to ensuring Tasmanian farmers have reliable water supply and in turn the confidence to invest and greater opportunity.

Farmers have long been concerned that the current approval process for dam works is too complex, and is a barrier to development and investment.

Today, I tabled the Water Management Amendment (Dam Works) Bill 2015, which includes a range of measures to simplify and streamline the dam works approval process.

This Bill includes the abolition of the Assessment Committee for Dam Construction, and accordingly the Minister or their delegate would make all decisions on dam works permit applications.

Since the Assessment Committee was established, 56 per cent of all dam works permit application decisions have been made by the Department, which is a clear indication of the very sound decision making processes where this task has been delegated to the Department.

It is very important to note that the current, rigorous safety standards will continue to apply. The integrated assessment of all environmental matters relevant to a dam works permit application is also maintained.

These proposed reforms will ensure farmers have a more efficient way of obtaining a dam works permit, improving certainty and reducing costs, including:

- Providing a simpler pathway for obtaining permits for low risk dams;
- Better defining the nature and scope of dam works permits;

- Specifying criteria under which dam works permit applications must be approved and the matters to be considered;
- Simplifying the timeframes for decisions on the permit applications;
- Providing for conditional approval of permit applications in some circumstances; and
- Adding the requirement for an annual review and report on the dam works approval process.

This will result in significant time and financial savings for farmers. For example, farmers seeking permits for low risk dams will save about \$800 in application fees and this simplified process represents a red tape reduction of 25 per cent of all permits.

By reducing the red tape we are giving Tasmanian farmers great confidence to invest, keep the economic momentum building and create jobs.

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