

FIRST SOD TO BE TURNED IN KEEPIT UPGRADE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 24 March, 2010

The first sod will be turned in the \$146.4 million Keepit Dam upgrade in a ceremony on Wednesday, 24 March 2010.

The ceremony will recognize the commencement of construction for the project which will potentially employ up to 200 full time staff and generate \$115million in gross regional product and \$54 million in household income.

State Water CEO George Warne said the sod-turning ceremony was an opportunity to celebrate the important milestone in the largest of State Water's dam safety upgrade program.

"From an economic perspective, Keepit Dam is the largest of the eight dams undergoing works in State Water's dam safety upgrade program," Mr Warne said.

The project involves raising the main and subsidiary dam walls, constructing three saddle dams and two spillways to enable the dam to withstand extreme floods and earthquakes.

Local dignitaries, representatives from the main contractor, John Holland Group as well as sub-contractor Soil Conservation Services and upgrade stakeholders will join representatives from State Water to attend the ceremony.

"The ceremony will bring those heavily involved in the project together for this project which will bring the dam into line with contemporary dam safety standards and improve downstream river quality," he said.

A multi-level offtake structure and three fishways will be constructed as part of the upgrade to reduce the impacts of cold water on the river and fish downstream of the dam.

Public access to the main dam wall will be restricted during construction for safety purposes. A viewing and turning area will be available at the approach to the main wall. Construction is expected to take three years.

-ENDS-

MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

What: Keepit Dam sod-turning ceremony

Where: The camping area, Keepit Dam State Park, Keepit Dam Road, via Oxley Highway

When: 11am, Wednesday 24 March 2010

Photo ops: Local dignitaries from Gunnedah and Tamworth, State Water CEO, John Holland representatives and stakeholders involved in project with the backdrop of the dam.

Media enquiries and interviews
Jane Urquhart (02) 6841 2087 0429 449 711