



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

2nd December 2008

Groundwater study breakthrough!!

\$1.5m Federal funding welcomed

Commonwealth has role in future mining development in Murray Darling Basin

The Federal Governments' commitment to fund \$1.5m of the cost of the independent study into the impact of mining on groundwater is recognition that the Commonwealth sees the issue as a legitimate concern to the Murray Darling Basin and that it needs investigation in a scientific sense according to the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor thanked Minister Penny Wong for recognising that the issue is of national importance saying that the study would lead to an across the catchment understanding of water issues and a template for other areas.

Mr Windsor also thanked the groups and people who have driven the action that has brought about this result.

"The Caroon Coal Action Group, Namoi Water, the Namoi Catchment Management Authority, the Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee and the many individuals in the local communities can all take great credit for their persistence on this issue.

Whilst the battle is not completely over, I would particularly like to thank Liverpool Plains' farmers, Tim Duddy and Doug Rankin, Namoi Water's John Clements and Australian Greens Leader Senator Bob Brown and his team for their efforts," Mr Windsor said.

The Federal funding will require matching funding from the NSW State Government and industry dollars however Mr Windsor said that there is a process currently underway instigated by the NSW Government that should bring this funding to fruition.

"The undertaking of the study will need to be based on the Pam Allan facilitated process put in place recently by the NSW Government.

This process is nearing completion and whilst it will require some flexibility once an agreed process is determined, I am confident that it will meet the needs of all concerned.

It will enable the study to be undertaken with the vital knowledge gained being able to provide decision makers with the science on which to truly understand the impacts of the mining process not only on the

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local landscape but also further downstream in the interconnected groundwater aquifers,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor wasn't so complimentary about the performance of the National Party on this issue however.

“The Nationals butchered an amendment to the Water Amendment Bill 2008 that they had previously supported on two occasions which would have led to a study prior to exploration licences being granted.

“Their flip-flopping on their support of both my and the Greens amendment would have meant such a study, now being partly funded by the Government, had to be done for all such areas as a matter of process rather than having to make application for funding for each instance.

“The Nationals, at the behest of the mining industry, cast aside the concerns of the people of the Liverpool Plains and the Murray Darling system and essentially reinstated the flawed state based mining approval and assessment process.

“This process has no regard for potential offsite impacts of subsidence mining and how it could impact on quality and quantity of inflows into the Murray Darling system.

“The Nationals were a confused rabble on their position on whether to support farmers – their core constituency – or miners – their core backers and puppeteers.

“Once they had the thumb screws put on them by the mining industry, they crumbled and left the farm sector to fend for themselves.

“The Nationals were again held captive, which again proves that when it comes to crunch time instead of supporting the interests of the very people they are supposed to be representing they would rather bow to the power of others.

“The Nationals had a big opportunity to regain some lost ground in the rural community on this issue but unfortunately they have only reinforced their inadequacy as representatives of country people.

“Their once proud history will soon be just that – history,” Mr Windsor said.