

Hansard, Upper House, NSW Parliament 3 December 2008

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN WATER STUDY

Ms LEE RHIANNON: I direct my question to the Minister for Primary Industries.

Considering both Houses of the Federal Parliament last week supported legislation requiring independent water studies in the Murray-Darling basin prior to any future mining being approved, and despite The Nationals reversing their position under pressure from the mining industry, and given that the Minister has established a working party to formulate the terms of a water study of the Upper Namoi catchment and the Federal Government has committed \$1.5 million to that study, will the Minister commit the New South Wales Government to matching the Commonwealth's \$1.5 million immediately to enable the study to proceed in a timely manner? Will the New South Wales Government give an undertaking not to approve any mining developments in this area until such time as the study is complete? If the study shows that subsidence mining adversely impacts the underground or surface water flows, will the Minister give an undertaking not to allow mining to proceed?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: There has been considerable productive discussion with the local community in the Gunnedah basin, particularly in the Liverpool Plains area. The ongoing water study has also been the subject of detailed discussions. I will not make commitments about funding because I do not have authority to do so at this point. Nor will I make a commitment about how any future mining might be done if it were to go ahead. Processes are available and everyone knows about them. I will not intervene at this point by saying one way or the other what the Government's decision will be. I will leave it to the fruitful discussions that are being conducted.