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MEDIA RELEASE

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NATIONAL PARTY LEADER DUMPS PROPERTY RIGHTS

Member for New England, Tony Windsor, has criticised the Deputy Prime Minister and Member for Gwydir, John Anderson, for the hypocrisy of demanding property rights for farmers from the New South Wales Government and then signing away those rights in the recent signing of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water.

Mr Windsor said Mr Anderson had conned agricultural industry leaders at last weeks 'secret meeting' in Sydney with the formation of a Property Rights Taskforce and then signed away any negotiating position with the State Government.

At the launch of the National Action Plan on 10 October, 2000, John Anderson, Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Warren Truss and Prime Minister, John Howard, made great play of the inclusion of property rights in any funding arrangements.

Mr Truss said in welcoming the \$1.46 billion announcement by the Prime Minister in October 2000 that

"The plan recognises that actions required to sustain the environmental health of a region may affect the property rights of individuals and some local economies. Compensation must be payable under the plan to those adversely affected."

Mr Truss went on to say in a briefing note "*The Action Plan at a Glance*":

"In regard to policy improvements, the Action Plan proposes Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments agree to supporting an agenda of key land and water-use policy initiatives. These include:

- *Land-cleaning controls in salinity risk areas;*
- *caps on surface and groundwater allocations;*
- *improved security of property rights for water together with improved water pricing and trading arrangements;*
- *"buying back" water allocations to achieve sustainable water use."*

The Prime Ministerial Communiqué of the same date of the Council of Australian Governments meeting where the States and Federal Government had agreed on six elements to the plan "*all of which are necessary to achieve lasting improvements*" included:

"an improved governance framework to secure the Commonwealth-State/Territory Investments and community action in the long term: including property rights; pricing; and regulatory reforms for water and land use;"

"Now we know why John Anderson was not at the Property Rights Rally in Gunnedah yesterday," Mr Windsor said.

“He is more interested in the problem, not the solution.”

“By signing off on the bilateral agreement with New South Wales he has betrayed the farming community and removed any leverage he had on the State Government to obtain property rights at a state level.”

“The onus now will be on the Federal Government to use other means to compensate farmers for ‘loss of rights’ by use of an environmental levy or the withholding of Competition Policy payments from the state governments.”

Mr Windsor said farm leaders he spoke to at the Rally had no idea that the ‘secret meeting’ to establish a Taskforce on Property Rights was only a front for John Anderson and Warren Truss to abandon the principles set down in the COAG Agreement of October, 2000.