



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TONY WINDSOR MP
INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

Suite 2, Level 1
307 Peel Street
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

All Mail: PO Box 963
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Ph: (02) 6761 3080

Toll Free: 1800 66 8855

Fax: (02) 6761 3380

e-mail: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

Web Page: www.tonywindsor.com.au

MEDIA RELEASE

19th June 2002

PM backs justice for farmers on property rights - Windsor

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor is pleased that Prime Minister John Howard has come out in support of clearly defined property rights for farmers.

Mr Windsor asked the Prime Minister in Parliament on Monday why he had signed the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality bilateral agreement with the New South Wales government which contains the very same definition of property rights that only a matter of months ago was unacceptable to the Federal Government.

“What I have said on this matter I stand by, and we intend to deliver justice for the farmers of Australia on the subject,” was the Prime Minister’s closing remark.

“The Prime Minister’s answer to my question was the first time in the new Parliament that the Prime Minister had committed himself to a property right agenda.

Now that the Prime Minister has taken the lead on this issue there is no excuse for it not being a priority at the next Council of Australian Governments meeting,” Mr Windsor said.

Prior to the last election, the Government had promised priority at the Council of Australian Governments.

“Three meetings have come and gone without mention of property rights.

Now that the Prime Minister has elevated the status of the issue, we may see progress.

I am still concerned however, that even though this issue has been raised many times, there is no clear Federal definition of ‘property rights’.

I look forward to this being done at the next COAG meeting” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor's Question to the Prime Minister

Prime Minister, during the last election campaign you clearly supported the Deputy Prime Minister in his push for clearly defined property rights for the water reform agenda. You and your government clearly stated that the property rights definition of the New South Wales government was not acceptable to the Commonwealth. Why have you now signed the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality bilateral agreement with the New South Wales government which contains the very same definition that only a matter of months ago was unacceptable and while the New South Wales government is considering amendments to legislation that will shift all decision making power from the regional level as required under the national action plan, to the New South Wales Minister for Land and Water Conservation?

The Prime Minister – Mr Howard's answer

I can confirm that I supported the approach taken by the Deputy Prime Minister, and confirm I still do. I can also confirm that we have signed the national action plan on salinity. I take the opportunity of telling this parliament that this is the first serious attempt at a national level, since salinity became a major problem in Australia, to get a coordinated approach, and one by one, I am pleased to say, the states have come to realise the importance of joint action. I can assure the honourable member that there is nothing inconsistent between the signing of that agreement and pursuing the issues that I know are dear to the heart of the Deputy Prime Minister.

I might, for the benefit of the member for New England, inform the parliament that on Saturday, after my return from the United States, I rang the Deputy Prime Minister and thanked him for acting as Prime Minister during my absence—and complimented him on the very good job he had done, might I say. We had a lengthy conversation about a number of issues and one of the issues he specifically raised with me was the very thing raised by the member for New England—that was the question of property rights for water. It is a difficult and important issue, and I can tell the House that there is no more persistent advocate on this issue than my friend and colleague the Deputy Prime Minister. What I have said on this matter I stand by, and we intend to deliver justice for the farmers of Australia on the subject.