



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

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Murrurundi Tunnel planning funding will hopefully lead to start of work soon

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor is hopeful that funding of \$1 million for the planning of the Ardglan (Murrurundi) Rail Tunnel will lead to the start of work soon.

“I welcome the announcement by the Acting Prime Minister, John Anderson of \$1 million for the planning phase of the upgrade of the rail tunnel through the Murrurundi Range at Ardglan – and recognise it as a very positive step in possibly his last announcement as the Minister.

The need for this important piece of infrastructure has been recognised for many years by groups on both sides of the range who have undertaken much lobbying of both the NSW State Government and the Federal Government.

A number of feasibility studies have been undertaken in the past but despite strong community support and argument of the benefits of the upgrade, the studies have not made it to public scrutiny and obviously work has never commenced.

I trust this time that work will closely follow the finalisation of the plan,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor says that the tunnel has been a bottleneck to the development of the Gunnedah Coal basin and opportunities in the New England and Gwydir electorates as well as adding cost to freight of primary produce taken out of the region by rail which has meant a lower rate of return to the producer.

“The tunnel upgrade will enable double the number of carriages to be pulled by half the number of engines and therefore make the freight component more economic for getting the high quality coal from the Gunnedah basin to the Port of Newcastle bulk coal loaders and therefore much more attractive to export.

The cost of freighting our grains will be similarly more economic and therefore our primary producers will get a better return for their efforts,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor also points out the importance of the Murrurundi Tunnel to the proposed inland rail link between Melbourne and Brisbane and the benefits to Werris Creek.

“The upgraded Murrurundi Tunnel will make the Newcastle and Sydney basins more accessible from the proposed Inland Rail route from Brisbane to Melbourne currently the subject of a feasibility study.

It means that there can be a better integration of freight services and encourage more freight onto rail as the demand continues to grow as predicted.

Werris Creek could also benefit from the opportunity of being at the intersection of the Inland Rail route and the improved access to Newcastle and Sydney basins via the upgraded tunnel.

The flow-on effect of the Murrurundi Tunnel upgrade will be really quite significant,” Mr Windsor said.

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