



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Engineering works could find 'new' water

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has raised the issue of evaporative water savings and underground water storage at a meeting on Australia's water use - future needs and solutions in Canberra recently.

The meeting was addressed by Dr Alistair Watson a freelance economist and Distinguished Fellow of the Australian Agricultural & Resource Economics Society and Dr Stuart Minchin - Research Director, CSIRO Land and Water Division as part of the 'Vital Issues' program co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.

"I raised the example of the potential to save or create 'new water' with the re-engineering of the Menindee Lakes near Broken Hill and the possibility of using those savings to alleviate water problems in severely stressed water systems such as the Peel Valley and Namoi Groundwater zones.

The savings from re-engineering Menindee Lakes could be as high as 100,000 megalitres/annum.

This is due to the large area of shallow water subject to enormous evaporation.

By reducing the surface area exposed to evaporation and increasing the depth of the water, evaporation is greatly reduced hence the creation of savings," Mr Windsor said.

This forum followed on from a meeting on March 8 this year with the NSW Minister for Natural Resources Ian McDonald, Member for Tamworth Peter Draper and representatives from Tamworth Regional Council led by Deputy Mayor Cllr Phil Betts, Namoi Catchment Management Authority and Namoi and Peel Water Users regarding the possible upgrade of Chaffey Dam to overcome the extreme difficulties the Peel Valley Water users would experience with allocation cuts.

Mr Windsor said that there was an enormous opportunity within the Murray Darling Cap to utilise the water savings to rebalance the water needs of the most stressed systems in northern NSW.

"Given the unique storage and usage arrangements of Tamworth City and Peel Valley irrigators, the re-engineering of Menindee Lakes offers the ideal opportunity to save water within the existing policy arrangements," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor also raised the prospect of underground water storages as a more efficient way of storing water in certain geographical areas rather than above ground storages that were subject to huge evaporative losses.

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