



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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PM to look at independent study for Caroona coal water issue

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor in question time today, raised with the Prime Minister the issue of an independent groundwater study of the Caroona area subject of a BHP Billiton mining exploration lease.

Mr Windsor said he had been contacted by many groups and constituents concerned about the possible impacts of mining on the groundwater resources of the area and the possibility of other mines in similar groundwater areas.

Mr Windsor said he believed it was important that a fully independent study be undertaken rather than the development process by the mining company.

“This is not only important for the Liverpool Plains but also for the assessment of offsite impacts in other groundwater systems and the linkages with surface water,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor’s question to the Prime Minister

Mr Speaker, my question is to the Prime Minister and relates to BHP Billiton’s feasibility study into mining a 500 MILLION tonne coal deposit on the Liverpool Plains – west of Werris Creek.

Is the Prime Minister aware that the area proposed to be mined includes some of the best black soils in the world but also that mining could involve damage to precious groundwater aquifers which are part of an interlinked groundwater system in the Murray Darling Basin?

Prime Minister, given that there is virtually no research in Australia or globally into mining in high water bearing gravels and that your Parliamentary Secretary has indicated recently, that there is little knowledge of the linkages between groundwater and surface water systems, and that this mine could be the forerunner of many in the Murray Darling groundwater system, would the Prime Minister give due consideration to supporting an application for funding to the National Water Initiative being made by catchment groups for an objective independent assessment of mining in water bearing gravels?

The Prime Minister

Well Mr Speaker – I won’t pretend, in answer to the Member for New England, to be across all the details of this – I’m not. I’ll make some inquiries and in that sense I’ll take the question on notice. I’ll consider what the Member has put. We’re interested in mining. We’re also interested in understanding the impact of mining on aquifers and water systems and certainly those that are linked to the Murray Darling system which is so important to eastern Australia and in relation to which there has been too little progress made over a long period of time. But I’ll take the question on notice and get back to him as soon as I can.

For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 668868