



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PM assures Windsor Government is considering 'independent' study into coal mining on Liverpool Plains

The Prime Minister John Howard has written to the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor giving an assurance that the Government is considering an 'independent' study into coal mining on the Liverpool Plains.

Mr Howard's letter follows questions in Parliament from Mr Windsor relating to National Water Initiative funds being accessed to fund an 'independent' study given the concerns of Liverpool Plains' community members and the lack of research available for mining in high water bearing gravels and the interconnectivity of groundwater and surface water systems.

Mr Howard said in his letter, "The National Water Commission was currently assessing the proposal against the assessment criteria as part of a competitive grants process".

The Prime Minister also indicated that the Government had allocated funding for "mapping potential surface water and groundwater connectivity across Australia: Funding of \$500,000 (from the Raising National Water Standards [NWRS] programme) will be provided to carry out catchment scale screening to determine potential connectivity of surface and groundwater systems across Australia. The desk top study will use a connectivity index model to determine the level of connectivity along river reaches within surface water catchments. The project will provide water managers with a visual indication of the areas of potentially high connectivity within catchments, allowing them to better allocate resources to these areas."

The Prime Minister went on in his letter, "I understand that the mining proposal on the Liverpool Plains will be subject to the planning approvals of the NSW Government. As such, a formal process will be followed to examine the range of social, economic and environmental impacts that a mine in the Caroon area may have. Should any matters of national environmental significance be identified, as described in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the Commonwealth Government will undertake an assessment of the impacts of the proposed development.

While the Commonwealth Government is providing extensive support to improve knowledge, the responsibility to manage and protect groundwater resources rests with the states and territories."

Mr Windsor is pleased with the Prime Minister's follow up on this important issue.

"I thank the Prime Minister for his involvement in the important environmental issue of the impact of mining the highly productive yet sensitive Liverpool Plains area and look forward to a positive outcome in the near future," Mr Windsor said.

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