



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

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Windsor calls on Federal Govt to make Chaffey Dam funding decision

The upgrading of Chaffey Dam was raised by the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor in the Federal Parliament yesterday (May 29). The following is the Hansard of his speech.

Mr WINDSOR (New England) (4.19 p.m.)—Most members would be aware of the problem that Chaffey Dam in my electorate is confronted with. Chaffey Dam is a 62 gigalitre dam and has approval to increase its size by 40 gigalitres, which will take it to 102 gigalitres. This is a \$29 million project. The state government, the local council and the irrigators in that catchment have put together \$23 million of the \$29 million. A proposal by Councillor Phil Betts and the reference panel that looked at this issue and has been working with the various governments has recommended that the Commonwealth government put in \$6.5 million. The Deputy Prime Minister during the recent state election campaign was very keen on the project, but since the government's candidate did not win the seat of Tamworth the Deputy Prime Minister seems to have got somewhat cooler on the issue.

The \$6.5 million equates to \$162 a megalitre. This is an incredible investment for this community. Most people would be aware that, even on the irrigation market today, water is selling at about \$2,500 to \$3,000 a megalitre. In the urban market, water is selling for up to \$7,000 a megalitre. The community is asking the Commonwealth for \$162 a megalitre for an asset for that community that could be worth anything up to \$7,000 per megalitre.

I congratulate Councillor Phil Betts, the Deputy Mayor, on being able to weave a path, particularly in New South Wales, where in the past the New South Wales government has not been too keen to increase storage. Through the capacities of Phil Betts, \$23 million has been put together for this very important project. Chaffey Dam is at less than 15 per cent. We are hearing daily the Commonwealth government suggesting that we have to look after our inland communities. We have to look at water supply situations. We are also hearing it, I am pleased to say, from the opposition. So it is a very important issue.

...I call on the Commonwealth government to make a decision. I know they are looking at this issue as we speak. If the decision is no, we will raise the money elsewhere; but let the people of Tamworth, the community and the irrigators in the Peel system know what the decision is very quickly, because there is at the moment a window of opportunity that is too good to miss for this community with the New South Wales government and environmental approvals that have been put in place. If the Commonwealth does not want to do it we will go ahead with other moneys, but the Commonwealth should let the community know and not let this drag on. (*Time expired*)

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