



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TONY WINDSOR MP
INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

Shop 5
259 Peel Street
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

All Mail: PO Box 963
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Ph: (02) 6761 3080
Toll Free: 1300 301 839
Fax: (02) 6761 3380
e-mail: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au
Web Page: www.tonywindsor.com.au

Media Release

16 July 2007

Windsor welcomes candidates to field but disappointed Chaffey Dam Upgrade politicised

The announcement of National Party and Labor Party candidates for the seat of New England for the Federal election to be held before the end of the year has been welcomed by the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor.

“I welcome Phil Betts for the National Party and Luke Brand for the ALP to the field for the seat of New England at the upcoming Federal election.

It’s one of the many good things about Australia that we have a strong respect for the democratic process and that individuals have the ability to put themselves before the people of the electorate to seek their endorsement to represent them in the Australian Parliament.

I look forward to putting my performance as the Member for New England over the last six years before the people to again seek their support to continue to be their Federal representative,” Mr Windsor said.

Whilst welcoming the new candidates to the field, Mr Windsor expressed his disappointment that the National Party appears to want to use the Chaffey Dam upgrade as a political tool in the campaign rather than placing it above politics.

“The Chaffey Dam upgrade was politicised during the State election earlier this year with the Federal National Party Leader saying the project was not just of local importance but also of national importance and then back-flipping after the National Party State candidate was unsuccessful.

What we now hear is the National Party saying that unless their candidate is elected, the Chaffey Dam upgrade won’t get Federal funding.

This is another attempt to hold the community to ransom rather than delivering in a timely manner so that people may see them in a positive light throughout the term of government and not just making promises at election time,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that the National Party has not learned from previous project funding announcements at election time.

At the 2004 election, the Equine Centre was used by the National Party to try to buy votes and the Regional Entertainment Centre was announced in the lead up to the 1998 Federal election despite numerous visits from Federal Ministers.

On both occasions, all other funding partners had committed their contribution to the projects but the National Party kept the community dangling till the election to announce their funding.

With the Chaffey Dam upgrade, the State Government is committed along with the Tamworth Regional Council and the irrigators and now all that remains is the Federal funding.

....2/

Further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 66 8868

There's a definite pattern emerging here that I'm sure people will recognise," Mr Windsor said.

As a result of Mr Betts candidacy for the National Party, Mr Windsor believes that the Tamworth Regional Council must move to ensure the project does not get locked up in politics.

"With Mr Betts now being the National Party candidate, the Chaffey Dam upgrade will unfortunately become a political football – something I believed we were all trying to avoid.

Tamworth Regional Council must now act quickly to minimise the results of this happening.

We have a \$29.1 million project that can't proceed unless \$6.5m is raised to finance its completion.

As I said after the State election and the Federal National Party back-flip, we have to ask ourselves what this project is worth.

It will, after all, go a long way to securing the future of Tamworth's water supply – and the viability of the local irrigation industry – for the next 40 to 50 years.

By my calculation 40,000 megalitres is worth \$100 million just for irrigation purposes given it is currently trading for about \$2500 per megalitre. Its value for urban use has been estimated as high as \$7000 a megalitre.

Under the Chaffey Augmentation Upgrade proposal it will cost \$6.5 million to lock in an additional 40,000 megalitres of storage at Chaffey.

This equates to \$162.50 a megalitre.

At least if Tamworth has to self-fund the \$6.5 million we are getting the capacity to store extra water worth \$2500 a megalitre for a very low \$162.50 a megalitre.

This raises the question of how we could self-fund the necessary \$6.5 million," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor has previously suggested a number of other funding options including:

- The Federal Government gives the money (without strings)
- Ask the State Government for more.
- The Tamworth Regional Council borrows the money.
- The TRC imposes a levy on water-users to repay the cost of the additional water security. If the 20,000 water users paid an additional one dollar a week (\$52 a year) it would take six years to clear the debt. Alternatively a one off levy of \$325 would do it in one go.
- Apply for other grant funding.
- Sell some of the water to fund the cost of the project overall. If council sold 2600 megalitres – just six per cent of the overall capacity increase – at \$2500 a megalitre it would raise \$6.5 million.
- The council could raise funds via temporary water transfers.

Mr Windsor believes that irrespective of how the project is funded we must not miss the opportunity to create water security for Tamworth City and the Peel River irrigators.

"We should not miss this opportunity because of game playing by some in the Federal Government and now the new National Party candidate.

Tamworth Regional Council should continue to examine all other options and not allow it to become locked up in politics," Mr Windsor said.