



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](mailto:Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au)  
**Web Page:** [www.tonywindsor.com.au](http://www.tonywindsor.com.au)

## Media Release

17 July 2007

### Give public a say on Murray-Darling water plan - Independents

The details of the federal government's plan to take over the Murray-Darling Basin must be made public and the basin's communities and irrigators must be consulted, according to Independent MPs Tony Windsor and Peter Andren.

"All the negotiation around the Howard government's \$10B water plan has involved federal and state leaders, ministers and bureaucrats with no sign that the communities and irrigators who rely on the Murray-Darling will get a say," Mr Windsor said.

"My independent colleague Peter Andren and I are calling on the federal and state governments to make the draft legislation and explanatory documentation available to the public with a view to launching an extensive community consultation process.

"If the Commonwealth government is going to take over control of the Murray-Darling, with the agreement of the States once Victoria gets on board, there are questions that need to be answered.

"For a start we need to be sure that such a transfer of control over water is constitutional. Section 100 of the constitution states: *The Commonwealth shall not, by any law or regulation of trade or commerce, abridge the right of a State or of the residents therein to the reasonable use of the waters of rivers for conservation or irrigation.*

"So 'the residents' of a State have the same rights as their state governments when it comes to the regulation of water. The Commonwealth may well need a referendum before they take control of the Murray-Darling," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Andren believes that there is also the question of how much authority is actually to be handed over by the states and how duplication of roles may occur and therefore duplication of costs to the taxpayer.

"What are the Commonwealth's plans for the allocation of water to the towns, irrigators, and to environmental flows? How can anyone accept the federal government's proposal without this information?

"This takeover requires extensive consultation for all the so-called stakeholders in the Murray-Darling basin before anything is decided and the federal government must make the details of its plan publicly available.

"The people of the basin must be confident that the Commonwealth is not just creating another layer of bureaucracy and that there will be sufficient checks and balances in place against the misuse of our precious water resources," Mr Andren said.

---

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