



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

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Windsor unlikely to support PM's Water Plan

The Prime Minister's proposal to 'seize' control of the Murray Darling system is unlikely to be supported by the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor when the Prime Minister introduces a Bill into the Parliament in August to do so.

Mr Windsor said there needed to be much more transparency on how the management of the Murray Darling catchment would change under Mr Howard's proposal and who would gain or lose under the proposal.

"Merely centralising control without outlining the fine detail of the impacts on water users and inland communities won't wash with country voters on the eve of an election.

This takeover of power from the states may well be a clever political tactic in certain environmental and city circles but country people want and should be given more detail.

After all, country people are the ones who will be most impacted on," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said the Commonwealth track record on water was not very impressive.

- 1 The failure to recognise the property rights of water entitlement holders as spelt out in the National Competition Water reform process of 1995.
- 2 The recent taxation treatment of compensation for groundwater users who have given up large amounts of water entitlements for the environmental good
- 3 The Commonwealth has been a signatory to NSW, Victorian Queensland and South Australian water sharing plans and has been a key player in determining the States Catchment Blueprints. In both processes, the Commonwealth hasn't suggested the States were negligent as the Commonwealth has handed over BILLIONS of dollars to the States on compliance.
- 4 The Commonwealth made great play of the success of the National Water Initiative (NWI) only a few years ago – what has changed?
- 5 The Commonwealth's original position of supporting privatisation of the Snowy Hydro Electricity Authority may be an insight to where centralised Government control may lead in the future.

Mr Windsor said if the Labor Party had been in power and made these proposals, country people including National and Liberal politicians would go absolutely feral.

"The Commonwealth's performance on water reform is as poor as the States.

Much more scrutiny of Mr Howard's proposal is required before anyone can endorse it.

No longer should country people just blindly trust Government.

They should demand detail or question what the Government has to hide if it is not given," Mr Windsor said.