



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Windsor calls on Turnbull to reveal Chaffey Dam knowledge

The following is Hansard of the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor's Adjournment Debate calling on the Minister for Environment and Water to correct the parliamentary record on his knowledge of the Chaffey Dam upgrade near Tamworth.

#### ADJOURNMENT 9<sup>th</sup> August 2007 Chaffey Dam

**Mr WINDSOR** (New England) (4.30 p.m.)—I asked a question of the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources during question time yesterday about the upgrade of Chaffey Dam, which is the major source of water for Tamworth and the Peel River irrigators in the electorate of New England. The question related to any policy objections that the minister might have at a federal level. As part of his answer the minister said that the states were responsible for water even though changes were proposed at the federal level, but he did indicate that there could be some federal policy implications as a result of the enlargement of the dam and that the Environmental and Biodiversity Conservation Act might be an issue. I asked the minister whether he had any objections, and he replied:

I cannot tell the honourable member whether I object to something in respect of which I know no more than that which he offered to the House just a few moments ago.

I call on the minister to correct the parliamentary record. He is essentially saying that he knew nothing about the enlargement of Chaffey Dam. He should revisit his answer. I am told that departmental officers have been in a quandary today about how to handle the minister's misleading of the House that I allege occurred yesterday. The record shows that the minister was well aware of the proposal to augment Chaffey Dam. This proposal has been through a range of processes and it has been ticked off by the state government, the local council and the local irrigators. I asked a simple question of the minister yesterday and received a two-part answer. He said, first, that he did not know about it and, secondly, that he was unable—

**Mr Baldwin**—Mr Speaker, on a point of order: the accusations being levelled by the member are fairly serious and they should be dealt with by substantive motion rather than in an adjournment debate.

**The SPEAKER**—I am listening carefully to the member for New England. I am sure that he is well aware that if he wants to move a substantive motion he should do so at the appropriate time. But I will call the member for New England again.

**Mr WINDSOR**—A series of meetings has been held about the enlargement of the Chaffey Dam and the Mayor of Tamworth has met with the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Vaile, and the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Mr Turnbull. The Namoi Catchment Management Authority has also met with Mr Turnbull and the irrigators have met with the Assistant Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Hon. John Cobb. The Deputy Prime Minister has spoken to the

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Chairman of the Chaffey Dam upgrade reference panel, Deputy Mayor Mr Betts. Despite all this, the minister suggested that he knew nothing about it until I mentioned it in parliament yesterday. There are many letters referring to this matter. I refer to a letter from the Deputy Prime Minister's chief of staff dated 21 March 2007 to Mr Betts concerning the potential for the Commonwealth government to invest in the upgrade of the Chaffey Dam. He states:

Mr Vaile has passed your letter on to the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources the Hon Malcolm Turnbull. Mr Turnbull has asked me to thank you for your letter and to reply on his behalf.

The assistant minister for water has received numerous submissions about this issue and a proposal has been before the government since February, when the Deputy Prime Minister came to Tamworth and met with the mayor. I call upon Mr Betts, Mr Treloar, the mayor of that community, Mr Vaile, Mr Cobb and Mr Turnbull to tell the public what is going on. The continuing delays are impacting on the security of the water supply of the city of Tamworth. Given the ongoing uncertainty about the new Water Bill and the approval processes that have been put in place at the state level, the Tamworth and Peel River communities need a decision. My simple question to the minister was whether he had an objection. He should come into this place and revisit the answer he gave yesterday, where he in my view misled the House—because he knew very well about this—

**The SPEAKER**—Order! The member will not make an allegation like that. The honourable member will withdraw that.

**Mr WINDSOR**—I withdraw, Mr Speaker. More importantly, the minister should tell the people of Tamworth whether he has an objection to this proposal. He has known about it for six months. *(Time expired)*