



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor praises local handling of horse flu but Moonbi needs “Natural Disaster” declaration to trigger more assistance

Local handling of the equine influenza outbreak has been praised by the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor however he wants the Moonbi Sportsground to be declared a “Natural Disaster” area to trigger better assistance to those people with quarantined horses there.

Mr Windsor says Moonbi Sportsground is a unique situation where 38 horses have been quarantined since Saturday afternoon with 10 people from the Hunter, Nyngan and Northern Tablelands having to live on site to look after their horses in facilities not built for long term stays as well as local people returning each day to tend their horses.

“Having visited the Moonbi site today and having had my staff helping out since first thing on Monday morning, it is apparent that conditions at Moonbi are very trying on people there.

Declaring the Moonbi Sportsground a “Natural Disaster” area would immediately enable more tangible support to be provided to these people in terms of emergency accommodation and catering services as well as Centrelink support which would make their forced stay more tenable.

As I wrote to the Prime Minister and Ministers for Agriculture, Human Services and Family and Community Services on Monday, it is not the fault of these people that their horses are now affected by the equine influenza but they are the ones bearing the brunt of it.

I also urged the Ministers to deal with the ‘people’ issues with compassion and in a timely manner.

Whilst this is not ‘Foot and Mouth’ disease it is a lower level dress rehearsal and our response needs to address people needs as well as animal needs,” Mr Windsor said.

In praising the local handling of the situation, Mr Windsor thanked the community for its support.

“Local people have jumped into action to do their bit to contain the outbreak of the equine flu and I thank everyone directly involved or have lent support to horse owners in need.

In particular, people living close by Moonbi Sportsground have offered help with washing and personal needs.

The local NSW DPI team under the direction of Arnold Turner have done a great job in bringing the area into quarantine - something that no-one has had to do before.

Local Emergency Services have swung into action and Telstra have been on site looking at improving the communication on and around the site as well as establishing access to internet services so people can still be in touch with the outside world and access services like internet banking.

One lady from Guyra also brought a caravan down to help with accommodation on the site. Peel TV has provided a television and DVD player to provide access to news and evening entertainment and I’m sure many others who I am unaware of have also assisted greatly.

Moonbi Sportsground is a location where people are not located at home to be able to deal with this issue without major disruption to their daily lives and I request that it be given “Natural Disaster” status just as would be declared for flood, fire or other natural disaster,” Mr Windsor said.

For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 668868