



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor questions Turnbull about Chaffey Dam Enlargement Funding

The Independent Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor, today raised the following question in Parliament during Question Time with the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull, MP, regarding the announcement of Federal Government funding for the enlargement of Chaffey Dam.

Mr Windsor: Mr Speaker, my question is to the Minister for Environment and relates to a recent announcement of six and a half million dollars from the Australian Water Fund towards the \$29 million upgrade of Chaffey Dam in my Electorate. Minister given that the Deputy Prime Minister declared that the funding was a done deal and not an election promise, how does the Minister explain comments in today's Financial Review where his office states in relation to Chaffey Dam, and I quote, "There were hurdles to clear before the Commonwealth funding could proceed and that the project needed to be," and I quote "consistent with the principles of the National Water Initiative and the objectives of the National Plan For Water Security". Could the Minister explain these inconsistencies between his office and that of Mr Vaile's announcement and could the Minister guarantee to the people of Tamworth that the upgrade will proceed?

Mr Turnbull: I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The Deputy Prime Minister's announcement on the third of September to contribute six and a half million dollars to the Chaffey Dam augmentation project will improve water supply security for Tamworth and Peel Valley irrigators. It is important for the Honourable Member to remember that the funding is provided through the Australian Government Water Fund which is administered by the National Water Commission. It is contingent, as is all funding through the water fund, on the National Water Commission being satisfied that the business plan and that the project is shown to be consistent with the National Plan for Water Security, the National Water Initiative and the Australian Government's environmental standards. The dam expansion will undoubtedly be referred for consideration as a controlled action under the EPBC Act so that is an environmental permitting hurdle that it has to meet. The funding is also contingent on the NSW Government and other stakeholders meeting their agreed funding shares. Now I'm confident, or optimistic perhaps I should say, that those conditions can be met but they are in large measure in the hands of other people. The Honourable Member must understand that all water funding out of the Australian Government Water Fund has to meet these or similar conditions.

"Mr Turnbull essentially washed his hands of Chaffey Dam in Question Time today and put it back into the realms of a pre-election stunt," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Turnbull said that he was "*confident, or optimistic perhaps I should say, that those conditions can be met but they are in large measure in the hands of other people.*"

Mr Windsor said this is very different to what the Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, had to say in Tamworth recently where he said it was a done deal, not an election promise.

"How can a Government announce the funding of a project and then ask for a plan of the same project? Surely these issues would be assessed before an announcement of funding is made."

"Mr Turnbull to my knowledge has six copies of the Chaffey Dam Reference Panel proposal document, which is fully costed, including plans personally delivered to his office," Mr Windsor said.

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