



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Equine Centre funding Vaile had prior opportunity to sign off on it

Claims that an application for additional Federal Government funding to cover escalating costs for the Australian Equine and Livestock Events Centre (AELEC) in Tamworth had been delayed by the Federal election were not accurate according to the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor.

The Equine Centre received an initial \$6.6m grant from the Commonwealth Government and then requested an additional \$5.5m due to a blow-out in costs prior to the Federal Election.

Mr Windsor said that the former Liberal/National Party Government had not signed off on the application partly because of a pending Australian National Audit Office report into grant funding by the Regional Partnership Program, the Minister in charge of that program at the time being Mark Vaile – the then Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the National Party.

Mr Windsor believes it is inappropriate for anyone to suggest that the process was delayed entirely due to the Federal Election.

“Mark Vaile had every opportunity to sign off on this money if it was deemed appropriate under the existing Regional Partnerships Program guidelines.

To have not done so, given the pending Audit Report, would suggest that Mr Vaile had concerns about the appropriateness of an 83% escalation on the original \$6.6m grant.

This is another clear case of Mr Vaile making suggestions behind the scenes but not following through and then blaming the Federal Election.

It is also not correct for anyone to suggest that the Chaffey Dam funding was delayed due to the new Government’s razor gang review.

Mr Vaile never signed off on that funding either,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor has raised both issues with the new Minister, Anthony Albanese since returning to Parliament.

“I have raised the issue of escalating costs in relation to the Equine Centre with the current Minister Anthony Albanese and he is examining the issue as part of the Regional Partnerships Program procedures that were in place under the former Government.

“The Minister is also investigating the Chaffey Dam upgrade funding request,” Mr Windsor said.

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