



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Resources Minister meeting “constructive and positive” for Liverpool Plains

“Highly constructive and a positive move to resolving the ongoing mining, agriculture and groundwater issues of the Liverpool Plains” was the way the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor MP, has described his meeting with Resources and Energy Minister, the Hon Martin Ferguson in Canberra yesterday.

The meeting was organised following a question Mr Windsor asked of Minister Ferguson in Question Time during the previous week’s sitting relating to the role and potential role in the future for the Commonwealth to play in the Murray Darling system where mining is clashing with agriculture and water interests.

Minister Ferguson outlined a range of policy areas where the Federal Government may or can intervene with the mining process even though the States have principal responsibility for exploration licences.

Mr Windsor believes that this flies in the face of the flurry of activity in the Senate this week, which voted to refer any solutions back to the State Governments.

“The Minister restated the Commonwealth Government’s commitment to a catchment wide water study to scientifically assess the groundwater issues involved below the alluvial floodplain in the Namoi catchment.

“On 2 December 2008 the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, announced the Commonwealth Government would provide up to \$1.5 million for a Namoi Water study to be matched by the NSW Government and industry,” Mr Windsor said.

Minister Ferguson also undertook to look at the issue of exploration licences being granted on alluvial floodplains where the mining companies have publicly stated they do not intend to mine.

“The point that needs to be made is if these mining companies don’t intend to mine this land, why do they need a licence over it?

“If the reason is to assess the connectivity issues between the ridge country and the floodplain, which is generally espoused by the miners, those assessments could be done by the Independent Water Study.

“I look forward to working with Minister Ferguson to resolve this issue.

“I believe this week in Canberra may well be a watershed in terms of a national approach to mining activity in the Murray Darling system with Senator Brown’s motion focussing the attention of the Coalition and a greater involvement of Government Members,” Mr Windsor said.

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