



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Why can't BHP say No?

The Federal Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor, said today the State Government and coal mining company BHP have missed a golden opportunity to erase fears of damage to the Liverpool Plains and underlying aquifers by not fully excising that portion of BHP's Exploration Licence from mining totally.

Mr Windsor's comments follow yesterday's announcement by the Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy, Minister for Mineral Resources and Minister for State Development, Ian Macdonald, and BHP's new President, Energy Coal, Jimmy Wilson, that a special condition will be included on BHP's Exploration Licence preventing BHP from applying for a mining lease that includes long wall mining underneath the deep alluvial irrigation aquifers, long wall mining underneath the floodplain and open cut mining on the floodplain.

"In what has been dressed up as a positive step forward, nothing has actually changed," Mr Windsor said.

"In fact, the only change has been that the State Government has granted an extension of time to seek development approval for a mining project for BHP."

Mr Windsor described as disappointing that the company did not take the opportunity to voluntarily excise the floodplain from the Exploration Licence.

"BHP has not ruled out mining the floodplain, it has joined with the State Government to have a so called 'special condition' placed on its licence to explore.

"That 'special condition' could be removed with the stroke of a pen whilst the floodplain remains within the Exploration Licence.

"There are other forms of mining that could now or in the future could be used in a floodplain environment which have not been ruled out.

"All BHP have done is restate earlier promises that it won't mine under the floodplain using current technology – that still leaves the water resources and floodplain at risk.

"If BHP really believes that it has no intention to mine under the floodplain it should voluntarily hand back that portion of the its Exploration Licence to the Government.

"That is the only way it will regain any credibility in terms of this debate – the question remains: Why won't the company do the right thing?" Mr Windsor asked.

Mr Windsor is to meet with Jimmy Wilson and other BHP representatives today to discuss these issues.

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