



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Time to test Nats Amendment on Coal Mining

Recent utterances by the NSW State Minister for Mining, Ian Macdonald in relation to refusing to part fund the Independent Water Study of the Liverpool Plains is the third instance of attempts to bypass an appropriate scientific process to evaluate groundwater issues in relation to mining according to the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor said that Minister Macdonald's statement follows on from recent comments by Chinese company Shenua that it would not wait for a water study before proceeding to mine the Watermark area.

Another instance occurred at the recent Senate Inquiry hearings into the Murray Darling system when NSW Minerals Council Director Environment and Community, Ms Rachele McDonald in answering a question from Senator John Williams virtually told the Senator that his amendment to the Murray Darling legislation was a waste of space.

Senator Williams asked Ms McDonald, *"You are familiar that the federal parliament has passed a regulation that before mining can be carried out in that country a fully independent water test must be carried out on those underground aquifers?"*

Ms McDonald replied, *"I do believe that the majority of NSW regulations actually meet the requirements of what was requested."*

"It is time that the National Party Senators, who originally supported a much stronger amendment only to water it down to worthless words under orders from the Minerals Council, realise the error of their amendment and support the tougher position to truly protect alluvial floodplains.

"At the time the Nationals assured the people of Caroonna that the amended legislation would make it mandatory for a fully independent water study to be done.

"I commented at the time that the amendment only recreated Part 3(a) of the NSW Planning and Assessment Act and was effectively meaningless," Mr Windsor said.

That view has been reinforced by Shenua and the Minerals Council.

Mr Windsor laid the blame for any impact squarely on the National Party Senators.

"If the mining companies wriggle around the amendment as they appear to be saying they can, then the Nationals Senators who championed their cause will be directly responsible for any consequences.

"They can't have it both ways – either the amendment has teeth or it is useless.

"If it has teeth then it is LAW to have an independent study at a Federal level and it can't be fobbed off as part of the State's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

"Legal opinion suggests the amendment is worthless and I call on the National Party Senators to fix the problem of their own making and support those country people they purport to represent," Mr Windsor said

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