



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

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Breakthrough on mining/floodplain issue imminent

The Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor will again introduce an amendment to the Commonwealth Water Act 2007 to remedy the issue of mining exploration on alluvial floodplains within the Murray Darling system.

This follows the recent finding of the Senate Select Committee on Agriculture's Inquiry that identified that an independent water study should be an essential prerequisite before exploratory drilling commences in an area where mining exploration is to be undertaken.

Mr Windsor said it was time to redress the political manipulation of this issue in the Parliament in October/November 2008 when he moved an amendment to the Water Amendment Bill 2008 that would have achieved this outcome.

Mr Windsor's amendment read:

255C Mitigation of unintended diversions

Prior to exploration licences being granted for subsidence mining operations on alluvial floodplains that have underlying groundwater systems forming part of the Murray-Darling system inflows, an independent study must be undertaken into the impacts of such mining on those systems.

"My Amendment was supported by the Opposition in the House of Representatives but not by the Government so it was moved in the Senate by Australian Greens Leader, Senator Bob Brown in November last year.

"It again received the Coalition support in the Senate on November 26 but after being leaned on by the Minerals Council of Australia's Mitch Hooke, the Coalition changed its position overnight and changed the amendment from "exploration" licences to "mining" licences and in doing so maintained the current State Government Planning Act processes.

"I'm pleased this Committee is seeing the need for an independent water study prior to exploratory drilling commencing but the people of the Liverpool Plains have spent nearly eighteen months manning a blockade at 'Rossmar Park' unnecessarily had the Nationals and Liberals passed my and the Greens amendment.

Mr Windsor said the amendment would test the resolve of those Senators who changed the wording of the previous attempt to rectify the problem of allowing mining to occur without appropriate landscape considerations taking place.

"The amendment will be presented when the Parliament resumes next year.

I want to give the Parliament plenty of notice so that those who gave excuses last year of not being fully aware of the issue can't use ignorance as an excuse.

I have already spoken to a number of Senators and MPs about the amendment and thus far they are supportive.

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For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 66 8868

“It’s time that those Senators from all sides of the Parliament on the Select Committee actually stand up and vote for their own recommendations,” Mr Windsor said.

Senators involved on the Committee were:

Senator the Hon Bill Heffernan, Chair,

Senator Kerry O’Brien, Deputy Chair

Senator Mary Jo Fisher,

Senator Christine Milne,

Senator Fiona Nash,

Senator Glenn Sterle

and as a Participating member participating in this inquiry, Senator John Williams.