



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **PM may visit Liverpool Plains**

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd has today given an undertaking that either he or another Minister of the Government as appropriate will seek to visit the Liverpool Plains area with the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor.

The Prime Minister gave the undertaking in response to a question from Mr Windsor about the stated intention of the Shenhua Coal Company to commence mining in the area before the Independent Water Study into the impact of mining on the water resources of the Liverpool Plains is complete.

Mr Windsor said he would welcome the Prime Minister to visit the area.

“Every politician that actually sees the geography of the area can fully understand the risks that would be inherent in mining large sections of the Liverpool Plains floodplain.

“The Prime Minister would also get a clear picture of the potential downstream impacts on the Murray Darling System.

“It is imperative that before any mining takes place in the Liverpool Plains area that the Independent Water Study be allowed to take place.

“Statements by Shenhua that they would start their mining operations before the Study is done shows a total disregard for the impact of their activities on others in the valley and further down the system.

“The Study will identify if there are any problem areas that really shouldn't be mined and if they can't wait for the study to be completed, people have a right to be suspicious of their project and doing the right thing in terms of the environment and not mining in sensitive areas where aquifers cannot be fixed if broken,” Mr Windsor said.

**Mr Windsor's question and the Prime Minister's answer follow on Page 2**

**Question from Tony Windsor MP to the Prime Minister**

**Mr WINDSOR** (3.17 pm)—My question is to the Prime Minister and relates to the mining companies BHP and Shenhua Coal, and their coal exploration licences on the Liverpool Plains in the electorate of New England. The Prime Minister would be aware of the widespread concerns of these potential projects on the enormous groundwater reserves and the alluvial floodplains of the region and the Murray-Darling system. Given recent statements in China that Shenhua Coal would eventually mine under the floodplain and the Mooki River, and given that Shenhua Coal is refusing to await the results of an independent water study, which is partly funded by the Commonwealth government, would you, Prime Minister, visit this area and see for yourself the unique geographical and hydrogeological features of this area and the associated risks to the Murray-Darling system?

**Mr RUDD**—I thank the member for New England for his question. I am familiar with the company, Shenhua, and I have known of its operations for many, many years. The particular project that the honourable member refers to in his part of Australia I am not familiar with. But I have listened very carefully to his question and he goes to the core point of environmental approvals. I do not know what stage those approvals are at and the extent to which they currently involve both the state and federal governments, given that it involves not just the water system but I presume other environmental dimensions as well. On the question of statements made by Shenhua from Beijing on this, that it is their predisposition to proceed with this project prior to approvals being granted, prima facie I would find that unacceptable in terms of the provisions of Australian law. However, as the member has raised it, I will go into the detail of the matter and report back to him separately on it. As for visiting the area, given he has raised it in this place, either myself or another minister of the government, as appropriate, will seek to visit the area with the honourable member to ascertain what the best way forward is.