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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## MEDIA RELEASE

27 May 2010

# Take politics out of Chaffey Dam upgrade

The Mayor of Tamworth and candidate for National Party preselection James Treloar should stop using Chaffey Dam as part of his political campaign to enter State Parliament and concentrate on the job as Mayor or run the risk of being responsible for derailing the process according to the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor says that rather than Mr Treloar creating a political beat up in conjunction with his campaign newsletter writer, the Northern Daily Leader wherein Mr Treloar says on May 25 "But we are not hearing anything about funding arrangement from the State and Federal Governments – we're hearing no communication", he should pick up the phone and seek the information he desires.

"Mr Treloar may like to talk to his own Council's water officer Bruce Logan about recent briefings he has had about Chaffey Dam.

"He may like to speak with the Chair of the Chaffey Dam Upgrade Community Reference Panel Augmentation Sub-Committee, Bruce Brown about the meetings that will be held next week on this issue and the various phone communications that have taken place.

"He may even like to speak to the man he is trying to unseat, Peter Draper about discussions on the matter at various levels.

"Mr Treloar knows very well that the augmentation funding was on hold until the Peel Valley Water Sharing Plan was in place and now that it is – it was only Gazetted on April 23<sup>rd</sup> - negotiations with regard to funding the project can and have recommenced," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said that Mr Treloar was also fully aware of the political games played by the National Party in the lead up to the last State and Federal elections when the National Party in Government said the funding was "completely secure" and a "done deal".

"I have copies of letters and media releases from the then National Party Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile and the former candidate for New England for the National Party Phil Betts that everyone took at their word and thought that their word was their bond.

"Well after the election in November 2007, we all checked for our watches and they were gone and so was the funding that was 'completely secure' and a 'done deal'.

"We then had to start all over again and I have a letter from Senator Penny Wong, the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Water dated 7 October 2008 saying, "... Final commitment of Commonwealth Government funding can be confirmed once information has been provided to demonstrate how the project meets the funding conditions outlined in 3 September 2007 announcement. Finalising the water sharing plans for the Peel Valley will be an important part of satisfying the funding conditions....."  
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“Since that date, I don’t think anyone in the Chaffey Dam foodchain has received any advices or communication from Tamworth Regional Council other than the “No Dam Good” political sideshow in the May 25 Northern Daily Leader.

“The article also said that without augmentation the Peel Valley’s irrigation industry would be dead within 10 to 15 years.

“Isn’t this the same Mayor that was prepared to sell thousands of megalitres of Tamworth’s water to the proposed Silverweir vineyard development in 2000.

“If the Council was really serious about helping the irrigators, they would be reusing their greywater on playing fields and other community parks and gardens instead of using a lucerne plant to evaporate water and competing on a subsidised basis against the very farmers the Mayor says he is concerned about.

“If that was the case there would be a Murray Darling Basin cap credit to irrigators which would in effect increase allocations by 50%.

“The use of drift wells as a backup will also put pressure on the reliability of the Peel River for irrigators and risks sending a message to Government that we don’t need an enlarged Chaffey Dam,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that Mr Treloar is being hypocritical in his view of this issue and the Barraba pipeline.

“The Mayor has complained to Barraba residents supposedly sending negative signals about their town’s water position and here he is with no real basis doing exactly the same thing about Tamworth.

“The Mayor can’t have it both ways – it’s very hypocritical,” Mr Windsor said.

“The Northern Daily Leader confirmed only last week that in their communication with the Minister for Climate Change and Water, Penny Wong’s office that the Chaffey Dam funding was still available but this was not mentioned in the ‘No Dam Good’ article.

“One has to query the Northern Daily Leader’s agenda – getting more water for Tamworth or getting Mayor Treloar elected.

“Mr Treloar should stop using Chaffey Dam as part of his campaign to enter State politics and concentrate on his job as the Mayor.

“The Mayor and the other political aspirants on Council should work out whether they want to work with others to solve the issue or promote their own personal futures.

“I don’t know what it is about National Party candidates – must be something in the water they are given to drink.

“Chairman of the Chaffey Dam Upgrade Community Reference Panel Augmentation Sub-Committee, Bruce Brown has co-ordinated meetings to communicate with the various stakeholders and more will take place.

“Perhaps we should let Mr Brown chair that process and move away from political aspiration and tabloid journalism and get the job done,” Mr Windsor said.