



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TONY WINDSOR MP
INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

Shop 5
259 Peel Street
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

All Mail: PO Box 963
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Ph: (02) 6761 3080
Toll Free: 1300 301 839
Fax: (02) 6761 3380
e-mail: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au
Web Page: www.tonywindsor.com.au

Media Release

7 July 2010

Windsor welcomes Resources and Energy Minister to Liverpool Plains

The Hon Martin Ferguson MP, Minister for Resources and Energy will be visiting the Liverpool Plains tomorrow (Thursday 8th July) to get a first hand view of the geography of the area and an understanding of the potential impact of mining on the water resources of the valley.

Minister Ferguson's visit has come about after a question the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor asked the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd which drew an undertaking that either he or another Minister of the Government, as appropriate, would visit the area.

Mr Windsor is pleased that Martin Ferguson is that Minister.

"I have known Minister Ferguson for many years now and have utmost respect for his ability to look at the situation on the Liverpool Plains objectively.

"His visit will provide him with an opportunity to see and experience first hand why there is a need for an independent water study to be undertaken in the Namoi Valley before any mining takes place in the area.

"Minister Ferguson will meet with representatives of a number of groups to discuss their concerns.

"I welcome and thank him for his taking the time to visit the area," Mr Windsor said.

Media opportunities will be available at Rossmar Park, Caroonna at 11.45am

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

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.