



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

COMMITTEES

Regional Australia Committee

Statements

SPEECH

Monday, 22 November 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

<p>Date Monday, 22 November 2010 Page 20 Questioner Speaker Sidebottom, Sid, MP</p>	<p>Source House Proof Yes Responder Question No.</p>
--	---

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (10.21 am)—I thank the member for New England for his comments, endorse his statements and congratulate him on being appointed Chair of the Standing Committee on Regional Australia. I congratulate all the other members of the committee on their appointments. I want to reinforce what the member for New England had to say about the committee and the terms of inquiry. There is a belief that the proposed guide from the Murray-Darling Authority is set in stone. The member for New England is absolutely correct: this parliament will make its recommendations on that guide and its impact, environmentally, socially and economically.

The concern that the member raised is probably best expressed in a *Crikey* submission from Andrew Campbell, who wrote on 16 November:

The lack of buy-in to the draft Basin Plan among affected communities is palpable. The feeling that decisions that will affect lives and businesses are being made remotely, without a fine-grained understanding of local impacts or local solutions, is widespread across the Basin. Even among people who accept that the Basin is not a magic pudding, and that decades of over-allocation need to be corrected in the interests of long-term water security and river health, there is a strong perception that the plan is a done deal, that consultation processes are cosmetic, and that legitimate social and equity concerns are not being taken seriously.

That is the end of the quote.

As the member for New England said, and as was reiterated in a joint ministerial press release on 14 October by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government and the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities—Senator Ludwig, Minister Crean and Minister Burke—the intention is that this inquiry will look at and take notice of those people who have something to say about the economic and social effects of this guide. And a guide it is, and that was reiterated by Minister Burke.

I hope that the people of the Murray-Darling and all those interested in these very important questions will take heart from who is on this committee. There is a vast amount of experience and a great deal of interest in the Murray-Darling region among its members. The member chairing the committee, the

member for New England, Tony Windsor, has been in this place since 2001 and in the New South Wales assembly for 10 years before that and is well known throughout Australia for his interest in matters to do with agriculture and the environment and other rural and regional issues.

The member at the table at the moment, the member for Farrer, Susan Ley, is from the area of Albury in New South Wales and is a passionate advocate of her region. She works to get the balance right and advocates by representing people and listening to their views. My colleague the member for Capricornia from Queensland, Kirsten Livermore, has been in this parliament since 1998. She is another passionate advocate of rural and regional Australia with a great deal of interest in this area.

Michael McCormack, the member for Riverina, is from the National Party. Michael has a long history of being interested in issues that affect his community, working through his media and publications to help. That is why he is in this House: to represent those people. Then there is Rob Mitchell, the member for McEwen from Victoria; Dan Tehan, the member for Wannon in Victoria; Craig Thomson, the current Chair of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics; Dr Sharman Stone, the member for Murray; Patrick Secker, the member for Barker in South Australia; and I. We all have long histories of interest in matters rural and regional. We want to hear. We want to consult. We want to listen. And we will take notice.

The SPEAKER—Order! The time allotted for this discussion has now expired.