

FYI Questions without notice - Thursday 12 March - follow up to George Souris's email.

Sent: Friday, March 13, 2009 9:33 PM

## LIVERPOOL PLAINS GROUNDWATER SUPPLY

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Hon. DUNCAN GAY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries. Is the Minister aware of widespread public concern coming out of meetings that took place this week at Gunnedah, Narrabri and Tamworth to draft terms of reference governing the Liverpool Plains groundwater supply? Will he investigate these concerns, take appropriate action and report back to Parliament on the fairness, balance and appropriateness of the process currently underway?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: Before the honourable member jumps up with his barrel voice and makes a big claim about what is going on up there, he should check his facts with a lot more detail and a lot more acuteness. This week I have met with the various groups in relation to that area.

The Hon. Rick Colless: Name the groups.

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: The silly member over there asks me what I know backwards.

The Hon. Rick Colless: Name the groups.

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: Mr Tim Duddy and a few others came to my office the other day and we had a very lengthy discussion. I understand that work on the terms of reference and the study itself is well advanced. It will be a study probably well beyond any other water study that has been done in this country. I understand that all stakeholders are prepared to contribute to it and it is progressing very well. There will be a report from the person who is coordinating these efforts—the Hon. Pam Allen—and she will be reporting back to me fairly soon.

The Hon. Melinda Pavey: What!

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: They don't even know that. She has been working with the community now for months on this particular issue. I believe the proposed water study will be very extensive and will put to bed many of the fears that the poor old Nationals in that area are trying to whip up. The plain fact of the matter is The Nationals do not know where they are on this issue because the Leader of The Nationals in another place went up there not long ago and he seemed to suggest that mining and agriculture could coexist in this area. That is my fundamental belief.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. My question was a discrete question that asked the Minister whether he was aware of the concerns about the process and would he take action on it.

The PRESIDENT Order! The Minister will continue to be generally relevant.

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: What I was pointing out for the honourable member opposite was that I met with the community as late as Monday afternoon on this particular issue and

that I am aware of their concerns and I have been working on their concerns for months. Why does he think we got to this point in the water study? But what do the Federal Liberals and Nationals do on this issue? When they get legislation on this matter they should read what the local community is saying about them because they duded them when the amendment got up—they duded them in the Senate. They have a bit of form on this.

The Leader of the Opposition wants the media to be here to hear this, but all they have just witnessed is a spectacular display of ignorance by him. He set himself up, because I have been working with the community and meeting the community in relation to its concerns and issues and we will get a water study undertaken with the cooperation of the major stakeholders.

The Hon. Duncan Gay: Will you look at these concerns?

The Hon. IAN MACDONALD: What are you talking about? I think I have made it very clear: I am working with the community about its concerns.