



The Hon John Cobb MP

Federal Member for Calare

MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 21st January 2014

COBB PUSHES FOR NEW DAM PROJECT

Federal Member for Calare John Cobb has today called for the construction of a new dam in the central west, as the solution to the lack of water storage, and addressing job losses in our region.

Mr Cobb has proposed the construction of a 90,000ML dam at Needles Gap near Canowindra, and today called on the State and Federal governments to back the plan.

"We need this Needles Dam project now more than ever," Mr Cobb said.

"Recent announcements of job losses across our region, including at Electrolux in Orange and Simplot and EDI in Bathurst, and Coalpac and Centennial Coal in Lithgow, mean Calare needs a confidence boost.

"The local situation eroded further following last week's Energy Australia announcement of the virtual closure of its Wallerawang power plant by the end of March.

"This water storage solution will help combat these job losses."

The Needles Dam proposal would create approximately 150 jobs and take up to five years to plan and construct. When fully operational, it would provide greater water security to the whole region, including the Cowra and Grenfell local government areas.

Mr Cobb said, initially, \$3 million is needed for the Office of State Water to conduct a detailed feasibility study, including environmental, geotechnical and preliminary design investigations.

"I have written to the Prime Minister, as well as the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers for Water & Environment and Industry seeking their support and the funding for this proposal," Mr Cobb said.

"Regional Australia has been the hardest hit by the soaring cost of electricity and the high Australian dollar. Calare, as a producer and exporter of energy, mining, forestry, agriculture, manufacturing and food processing, has been severely disadvantaged by the Carbon Tax and Renewable Energy Target and the subsequent closure of businesses in these industries.

"The Federal Government must recognise the critical situation our region now faces – Holden job losses of 1300 and 1600 in the major cities of Melbourne and Adelaide are significant. But relative to Calare's population, they are nowhere near as devastating as our 1100-plus job losses."

Mr Cobb said the Needles Dam would ensure growth in urban development as well as industry, and would not only invite new industry to the region, but encourage the expansion of existing industry. It could even generate more tourism.

"It is wonderful to have the Mayors of the most affected LGAs supporting the plan, as well as Central Tablelands Water. They all know this is a regional issue," Mr Cobb said.

"We now need leadership at all levels of government to make this proposal a reality for our region, starting with immediate funding for the feasibility study," he said.



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THE NEEDLES DAM PROJECT FACT SHEET

The proposed Needles Dam project:

- would be built at Needles Gap near Canowindra on a catchment area of 532km, with several creeks feeding into it;
- is identified by the State Government as the most urgent of three possible sites for a new dam in New South Wales, and one of 100 identified by the Federal Government;
- would create around 150 jobs and take five years to construct;
- would have a storage capacity of 90,000 – 100,000 megalitres;
- would provide greater water security to eight local government areas – Bathurst, Blayney, Orange, Cabonne, Cowra, Parkes, Forbes and Grenfell;
- would provide a high level of water security for the region's urban, irrigation and mining needs;
- would become part of an integrated water system with Lake Rowlands and Carcoar Dam providing more than 40,000ML of water for urban use.
Lake Rowlands Dam has a storage capacity of 4,500ML and is used for town water. Carcoar Dam has a storage capacity of 35,800ML and is used for irrigation.