



MEDIA RELEASE – Putting Hume First – Time for Libs to Come Clean on One-Stop Shop for Environmental Approvals - James Harker-Mortlock – Independent for Hume – 22nd May 2013

“The Federal Liberal Party’s proposed one-stop shop for environmental approvals, mentioned again in the budget-in-reply speech, looks like being nothing more than an expressway for project approvals which could potentially impact upon residents in Hume”, said James Harker-Mortlock, independent candidate for Hume. “The Liberal Party needs to spell out now exactly how this proposal is intended to work - not spring the details on the Australian people after the election.”

“The Shadow Minister for the Environment, Greg Hunt, the main proponent of the one-stop shop concept was reported in ‘The Australian’ of October 1st 2011 as indicating that under the plan :

- a. *states and territories will be able to act as a one-stop shop for all environmental approvals – **this effectively puts the honey jar in the care and custody of the bears,***
- b. *in the case of major projects, such as offshore assessments, the states could hand their approvals to the commonwealth as the sole designated assessor – **this appears to be removing some of the sovereignty of the states which the Liberal Party claims at other times to be protecting,***
- c. *the one-stop shop process would be accompanied by compulsory deadlines for the whole of the approvals process of either 90 days or 180 days, depending on the project, with the potential for approval to be deemed to be given if the authorities failed to provide a decision – **this is a quite astounding concept, designed to serve the interests of developers and does not start from the premise of protecting the public interest,***
- d. *in addition to a single development process, the Coalition plans to create a single lodgement and documentation process – **but provides no details on how this would work.***

At a door stop interview in Brisbane on 20th April, 2012, Tony Abbott and Greg Hunt even extended their proposal further with Tony Abbott stating : ‘I think that having a one-stop-shop approvals process will give the states that sign up for it a competitive advantage and that’s what they all want. They all want to be able to say yes to high-quality developments that include the best environmental standards in a reasonable time. Good for the environment, good for the economy, good for people and as Greg says, under what we’ve got in mind, people ought to be able to get into their homes quicker because the kind of green tape that has strangled residential development and light industrial development for so long will be slashed under the proposal that we’re making’.

So what is this all really about? Selling a complex story of expediting development under the guise of helping people to get into a new home? What?

It appears that the Liberal’s business backers want this all to happen very quickly. As recently as May 18th of this year, Greg Hunt is reported in ‘The Australian’ as indicating that in the event of a Liberal victory at the election, discussions would begin with state governments to hand over environmental decision-making powers after one month, with a preliminary agreement in place at the end of month two. A series of one-stop shop agreements would be reached with states over several months and amendments to the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act after eight months. It is intended to have all agreements in place on the first anniversary of government.

It is hard to see how all this will work, especially in the time frames suggested. However, the philosophy behind the proposals is clear. On 23rd October, 2012, when speaking at the 6th Annual Carbon Farming Conference in Dubbo, Mr. Hunt stated : ‘A healthy economy will ultimately be the basis for a well-managed environment and will provide the financial resources to protect and manage our icons and scarce natural resources.’

Wrong Mr. Hunt. Badly wrong. Without a healthy environment you have nothing. You, and your Liberal colleagues, have the wrong end of the telescope. No amount of money will ever be sufficient to make up for the costs to our community of the permanent degradation of our valuable agricultural lands, our precious water systems, and our natural environment which hasty approval processes of the kind you are advocating are allowed to be put into place.

It is time that the Liberal Party spelt out very clearly to the public what its intentions are and it needs to do that now.”

For further information, please contact : James Harker-Mortlock - Independent Candidate for Hume - Mobile : 04 111 82649 Email : james@puttinghumefirst.com Website : <http://www.puttinghumefirst.com>