



SEATH HOLSWICH MP – STATE MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE – ESTIMATES HEARING

17th July 2013

BILATERAL APPROVAL AGREEMENT

Mr HOLSWICH: Deputy Premier, during COAG in September 2012 former Prime Minister Julia Gillard agreed to negotiate a bilateral approval agreement with the states and then backed down under pressure from the Greens. Have you had any contact with Prime Minister Rudd about this? Has Prime Minister Rudd given any indication that he will negotiate with Queensland?

Mr SEENEY: I thank the member for Pine Rivers for the question. As he quite rightly says, we were very disappointed at the reversal by former Prime Minister Gillard because at COAG in September and October 2012 the former Prime Minister agreed with the states that a bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and the states would reduce green tape and regulation, and our Premier, Premier Newman, was foremost amongst the states in advocating for that. But under pressure from the Greens, former Prime Minister Gillard withdraw her support for the agreement in December 2012 did a complete backflip. I wrote to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on 9 July this year asking him to revisit the bilateral approvals agreement that Ms Gillard had backed down on.

It is vital to the Queensland economy that major projects are assessed in a timely manner. There are currently 32 projects under active assessment by the Queensland Coordinator-General. These projects have the potential to generate \$71 billion in capital investment, providing over 38,000 jobs in construction and 24,000 jobs in ongoing operational roles. Delays in gaining Commonwealth approval under the EPBC Act has caused significant uncertainty and extra costs for a lot of these major projects. After a project has been considered by the Queensland Coordinator-General, the Commonwealth minister has six weeks to make a decision as to those projects.

The average time for the Commonwealth decision has not been six weeks; it has been 22 weeks 22 weeks rather than six weeks. Currently, there are seven projects sitting with the Commonwealth minister. They are the Eaglefield coal expansion, which has been there since 7 October 2011; the Washpool coal project, which has been with the federal minister since 10 May 2011; the Ellensfield coal project, which has been there since 4 December 2012, the Arrow Bowen pipeline, which has been there since 22 March 2013; the Range coast, which has been there since 3 April 2013; the Urquhart Point mineral sands project, which has been there since 3 April 2013; and the Newlands coal expansion, which has been there since 28 May 2013.

If Kevin Rudd wants to establish his credentials as an alternative Prime Minister, I would suggest that he needs to address these issues that are critically important to the economic development of Queensland and Australia. He was in Queensland yesterday and, as I said before, we were very disappointed that the Prime Minister could visit Central Queensland and North Queensland and not understand the importance of the role the Commonwealth has in approving these major projects.

I think it is time that Kevin Rudd concentrated more on the real business of government than on the politicking we saw over the last couple of days. The real business of government is ensuring that the economic future of our country is assured by ensuring that these projects are advanced to a stage where they can provide the jobs for Queenslanders and for Australians, they can provide the income for both state and federal governments, and they can provide the economic growth, the economic opportunities for Queenslanders. To do that we have to have an approvals process that is creditable but also allows the huge investments that are needed for these projects to happen in a timely way. There was no indication from Kevin Rudd yesterday that he even understood the role that the Commonwealth plays, let alone was prepared to make the sort of

commitment that one would expect from a Queensland based Prime Minister to the future of the Queensland economy and that was very, very disappointing.