MEDIA RELEASE

Steve Whan MLC

Shadow Minister for Primary Industries

Tuesday, 22 October 2013

LABOR TO OPPOSE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPT TO GUT SNOWY SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The O'Farrell Government's attempt to eviscerate the Snowy Scientific committee will be opposed by the Labor Party when it comes before the NSW Parliament, Shadow Minister for Primary Industries Steve Whan said today.

Returning life to the iconic Snowy River was one of Labor's most important environmental achievements and the Scientific Committee has been a critical and ongoing part of the river restoration.

Under the new O'Farrell Government model, the Snowy Scientific committee will:

- No longer provide expert advice on the adequacy of releases on the Snowy River;
- No longer be required to produce a public report on the state of the rivers in the system each year; and
- No longer will be required to include a scientist on the committee.

Instead the committee will be left with a single function, advising on the pattern of release of water for environmental flows.

The Labor Opposition is also extremely concerned about Minister Hodgkinson's attempt to remove the independence of the appointments to the committee, and give herself complete power over the majority of representatives.

"Minister Hodgkinson has shown no commitment to the restoration of the Snowy River, and now she is removing any semblance of genuine independent advice on the future of the river," Mr Whan said.

"Outrageously, the O'Farrell Government is removing the requirement for an independent scientist nominated by the Environment Minister to sit on the Snowy Scientific Committee.

"I was there in 2002 when then Premiers Bob Carr and Steve Bracks released the first environmental flows down the Snowy River.

"That day was the culmination of many years of campaigning by communities along the river, and it still took some years for flows that could have a real impact to get underway.

"The O'Farrell Government fails to understand that the job of restoring the Snowy has only just started – it is not a matter of just monitoring the river - there are critical decisions that still need to be made.

"Already the O'Farrell Government has sacked the scientific monitoring staff and now she is gutting the scientific committee – which under the Minister's plan, need not even include a scientist.

"The Labor Opposition will be opposing this Bill."

MEDIA CONTACT: STEVE WHAN 0429780883