

# Letter to Deniliquin from Sussan Ley

I write in reply to recent articles and opinions expressed in the Deniliquin Pastoral Times about making Farrer a marginal seat to tip the balance away from the Coalition.

Please remember, the problems we face in Deniliquin are the work of the State and Federal Labor Government, not the Liberal and National Opposition. If we want to change policies that damage this region, we have to change the Government.

Governments have a responsibility to put in place the right economic climate in which individual people can invest, take risks and feel confident. The current shortage of global finance is affecting everyone. People seem to be quite blasé about Australia's level of public debt, but the Coalition is certainly not. It would not matter how many millions of dollars of government funded infrastructure came to Deniliquin if the business environment is crippled by high interest rates and a collapse of confidence.

As a nation of nearly 22 million people trading in an inter-connected, global market place, we could have a raft of Government programs supporting food production, but nowhere to go if the demand for our products does not exist; hence the Coalition's strong belief in competent economic management and debt reduction. This current Government is costing Australia \$100 million a day just to fund our deficit for the 2010/11 year. How much productive infrastructure for the future does \$100 million a day buy, money that is now being blown by the current government in interest repayments?

There has always been a lively debate about the merits of independents with specific issues versus the mainstream parties. It is the team approach compared to the individual approach. The nature of Federal Parliament is that more can be accomplished when inside the main policy tent of Government. The independents within our parliamentary system have been very good at speaking from the sidelines but unless they end up with the balance of power and vote the same way, they are unlikely to be able to gather the 76 votes needed to support their proposals.

The situation Deniliquin faces is due to a few things, the main one of course being the drought. Only plenty of rain will change that. But then there's also been the water buyback - 863GL bought by the current Government with no plan about what to do with it - and the Murray was targeted above any other catchment.

The present Government was elected on a platform of returning water to the environment and Adelaide (2000 GL within 10 years) and they used their majority in Parliament to do it. They couldn't be stopped. If you're able to check online the transcripts of Parliament you will see that water and irrigated agriculture have been the topics I have spoken up for the most.

Before the Liberal-National Coalition was voted out of Government we implemented a \$6 billion program that invested in upgrading on-farm infrastructure, to help farmers do what they do best. Grow food. Penny Wong as the new Environment Minister refused to continue this program.

One of the Coalition's strengths is agricultural research and development, now slashed by this current Government. I've seen many examples where government funding gave us the leading edge when it came to farm technology and food production.

In addition, the Exceptional Circumstances Drought Support has put more than \$1 billion in farm and household support into NSW rural businesses. The Irrigation Grant of \$20,000 from the last term of the Howard Government came out of my office as Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture.

The lock up of our red gum forests was a decision by the NSW Government which I fought to prevent by drawing attention to the devastating effect it would have on those who live and work in these towns. The Federal Parliament did not have the constitutional power to change something totally controlled by this disastrous State Labor Government.

I am in Deniliquin regularly. I definitely know how people are feeling. I see what three years of Labor has done to our region, especially the most incredible damage done by Labor's mismanagement of water.

I am in touch with local people on a day to day basis. I have heard consistently from people throughout the 250,000 square kilometre electorate of Farrer about their struggles to make ends meet and the rising cost of living.

These current Government policies must change. I ask for your support to ensure the Coalition is re-elected in Farrer and nationally and this includes asking everyone I meet to think carefully about their Senate vote. Whichever side wins Government in the House of Representatives, please vote for our parties in the Senate because a Greens dominated Upper House will see a repeat of the disaster that has been the NSW experience.

A Coalition government will work directly with water supply companies like Murray Irrigation Limited to improve water delivery efficiencies and provide water for food production and the environment, rather than the Labor approach of dictating to local areas instead of consulting with them and then purchasing water on the market for the environment with no consideration of the social and economic impacts.

My commitment to this area and my support for the rural industries that grow food to feed the nation and the world is absolute and unwavering and is clearly demonstrated by my advocacy for the region both when in Government and in Opposition.

The message is clear. If you want to change the disastrous policies imposed on Deniliquin by the current Labor Government then the Government has to change. The Coalition has to be elected on August 21st. With Tony Abbott as our next Prime Minister, we can look forward to a much brighter future.

*Signed*  
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