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SECRECY AROUND HYDRO'S MALAYSIAN DAM CONSULTANCY

Tasmanian Power Users Left Exposed

Kim Booth MP
Greens Energy Spokesperson

Tuesday, 8 May 2012

mps.tas.greens.org.au

The Tasmanian Greens today expressed concern over the lack of transparency around Hydro Tasmania's risky hydroelectric dam building venture in Malaysia, which had potentially exposed the Tasmanian public to further power price rises.

Greens Energy spokesperson Kim Booth MP said his Right to Information request regarding Hydro subsidiary Entura Energy's consultancy work for the Bakun Dam project in Sarawak had been refused on questionable commercial in-confidence grounds.

"The refusal to provide a response leaves the public in the dark about the potential risks that Entura is taking in their overseas adventures," Mr Booth said.

"The Energy Minister needs to rule out the taxpayer being financially liable in the event of a dam failure, or some other critical problem with this controversial project."

"Following on from the TOTE debacle, this raises clear questions of the Minister's oversight into the decision to undertake a venture in Malaysia that potentially exposed taxpayers to serious financial risks, leading to inevitable power price increases."

“We know that the Bakun dam has displaced at least 9000 families in Sarawak and flooded 7000 square kilometres of land, much of which is critical rainforest.”

“We also know from the conclusions drawn in the Final Report by the Expert Electricity Panel that Hydro Tasmania appears to be empire building as it spends public dividends on building corporate arms like Entura.”

“Hydro Tasmania should clearly be focusing and spending money on their core business, which is delivering energy at the cheapest possible price to Tasmanians.”

“I have sent a letter seeking a review of this decision by Hydro Tasmania and will be challenging their claim that no information can be released about this project because of their interpretation of the RTI Act of what is ‘commercial in confidence’ and what information is in the public interest.”

“The Tasmanian public has a right to know what work the consultancy arm of Hydro Tasmania is undertaking and to make sure they are not unnecessarily undertaking risky projects that are potentially contrary to their own principles, as well as international social and human rights.”

ATTACHMENTS:

1. *Letter to Hydro Tasmania appealing Right to Information decision (8 May 2012)*
2. *Letter from Hydro Tasmania to Kim Booth MP concerning Entura RTI (20 April 2012)*