

Media Release

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Regional NSW can grow through sale of poles and wires

NSW Farmers announced today that it supports the privatisation of NSW's poles and wires assets so long as some assurances are made to country NSW.

The association passed the motion at a recent meeting in Dubbo of its Executive Council – its key policy-making body.

Members of the association agreed to support the privatisation so long as a minimum of one third of the funds from the sale or lease back arrangement are dedicated to rural and regional infrastructure projects.

This election NSW Farmers has highlighted the needs of rural communities through its #StandUp4Farmers campaign including investment in rural infrastructure.

Chair of NSW Farmers' Business Economic and Trade Committee Peter Wilson said that regional communities were crying out for properly funded infrastructure including road, rail, hospitals or schools.

"The NSW Coalition's project proposal of \$6 billion to fund such is an opportunity for regional NSW to realise real benefit and obtain properly funded infrastructure," he said.

The Coalition has an election commitment of a \$20 billion infrastructure program that would be funded from the poles and wires sale. It has also stated it will set aside \$6 billion of the funds from the asset recycling proposal for regional communities.

Mr Wilson said: "We want to see that regional NSW receives its fair share of any infrastructure program. Regional and rural communities make up one third of our state's population and it is only fair that a good portion of revenue from the proposed asset sale comes back to rural communities."

"In addition we also want to see a standard electricity contract for all NSW customers which contains an agreed universal standard of service and a maximum price determined by an independent regulator.

"The sale of the poles and wires shouldn't come at the expense of reduced infrastructure maintenance and development of the network or supply.

"Regional NSW electricity customers need a guaranteed continuity of supply as well as an assurance on price and service beyond 2015.

"Funds raised need to be properly invested to enhance infrastructure. Additionally the new

owner of the poles and wires need to guarantee maintaining the network and continuity of power supply."

NSW Farmers expressed concern that the ALP infrastructure package had ignored regional NSW west of the divide.

Mr Wilson said: "We urge the ALP to put into action its claim that it looks after the interests of all of the state of NSW.

"We also understand the National's agreed to privatisation of the poles and wires provided a proportion of this was secured for rural and regional infrastructure. We look forward to understanding the detail which underpins this quarantining of assets," he concluded.

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