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TURNBULL MUST PROVIDE ANSWERS TODAY ON DEFENCE LAND GRABS

Local farmers, business operators and community members will find little comfort in claims by Tim Nicholls, Queensland LNP Leader that “*I have spoken to the Prime Minister and he has now asked the Department to investigate alternative sites and locations, that’s the commitment I got*”.

The Prime Minister needs to talk to locals, not cut political deals with his mates.

Regardless if they have cut a political deal to try and save their mates, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister must stand up today and provide details about what this new and third investigation will entail. Will it feed into the master plan promised by Marise Payne? How long will this investigation take? Why has as the Prime Minister finally stepped in on this issue over the top of his Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister?

Yesterday Bill Shorten wrote to the Malcolm Turnbull calling on him to urgently explain:

What other land options it has considered and on what basis have these been ruled as unsuitable. Surely there are other alternatives to acquiring prime grazing land.

To what extent have all social, economic and environmental impacts been considered in the decision on which land to acquire. How can the Government realistically claim all impacts will be considered fully, now that Minister Payne as accelerated the decision process on land requirements to occur within the next four weeks.

Given consultation with local landholders and business owners has been woefully inadequate to date, how the Government has calculated the flow on secondary impacts to local businesses such as the fishing and meat industries. Removal of up to 70 000 head of cattle from this land, for instance, will directly impact on local abattoirs and cost Australian jobs.

Malcolm Turnbull must answers these questions today.

Adding insult to injury, tomorrow, after weeks of uncertainty for Queensland farmers being threatened with possible compulsorily land acquisitions by the Turnbull Government, Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce has finally decided he would undertake a Clayton’s visit to the Shoalwater Bay area in Rockhampton – the visit that’s not really a visit.

But an unsympathetic Deputy Prime Minister admitted yesterday that he failed to extend an open invitation to all 37 landowners facing compulsory land acquisition, nor has he made any attempt to speak with the broader community affected by the compulsory land acquisitions.

This extraordinary display of arrogance was exposed in an [interview with Ray Hadley](#). Barnaby Joyce had the nerve to blame his failure to listen on a local farmer, claiming “*Well, basically the news I’ve got is because it is his place, a private place, they don’t want a cast of thousands*”.

This is a reasonable position for the local farmer, but not for the Deputy Prime Minister. He could have shown some much needed leadership on this issue and found a way to meet all 37 farmers and key community members, rather than duck his responsibilities.

The Hadley interview and today’s claims by Tim Nicholl’s exposes the Turnbull’s Government disdain for those affected by the compulsory land acquisition. Farmers, business operators and the community need genuine answers not stalling tactics.

If Barnaby Joyce doesn’t front everyone affected it will show just what he thinks of the views of regional Australians.

THURSDAY, 2 FEBRUARY 2017