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GM can help food shortage: Burke

OVERCOMING future food shortages around the world will require "every possible path of scientific research," federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke says.

And that could include genetically modified technology, he has indicated.

On World Food Day, marked every year on October 16, the Federal Government has issued a dire warning that the world won't be able to sustain the projected population growth based on the current rate of food production.

The UN's Food and Agriculture

Organisation expects the world's population to rise to 9.1 billion people by 2050 which would require a 70 per cent increase in global farm production.

"On the face of it, it's an impossible equation – the only way we can meet what the world will demand is by following every possible path of scientific research," Mr Burke said in a statement.

The days of people closing their minds to biotechnology and food production are numbered, he said.

"I don't see how anyone can mount a

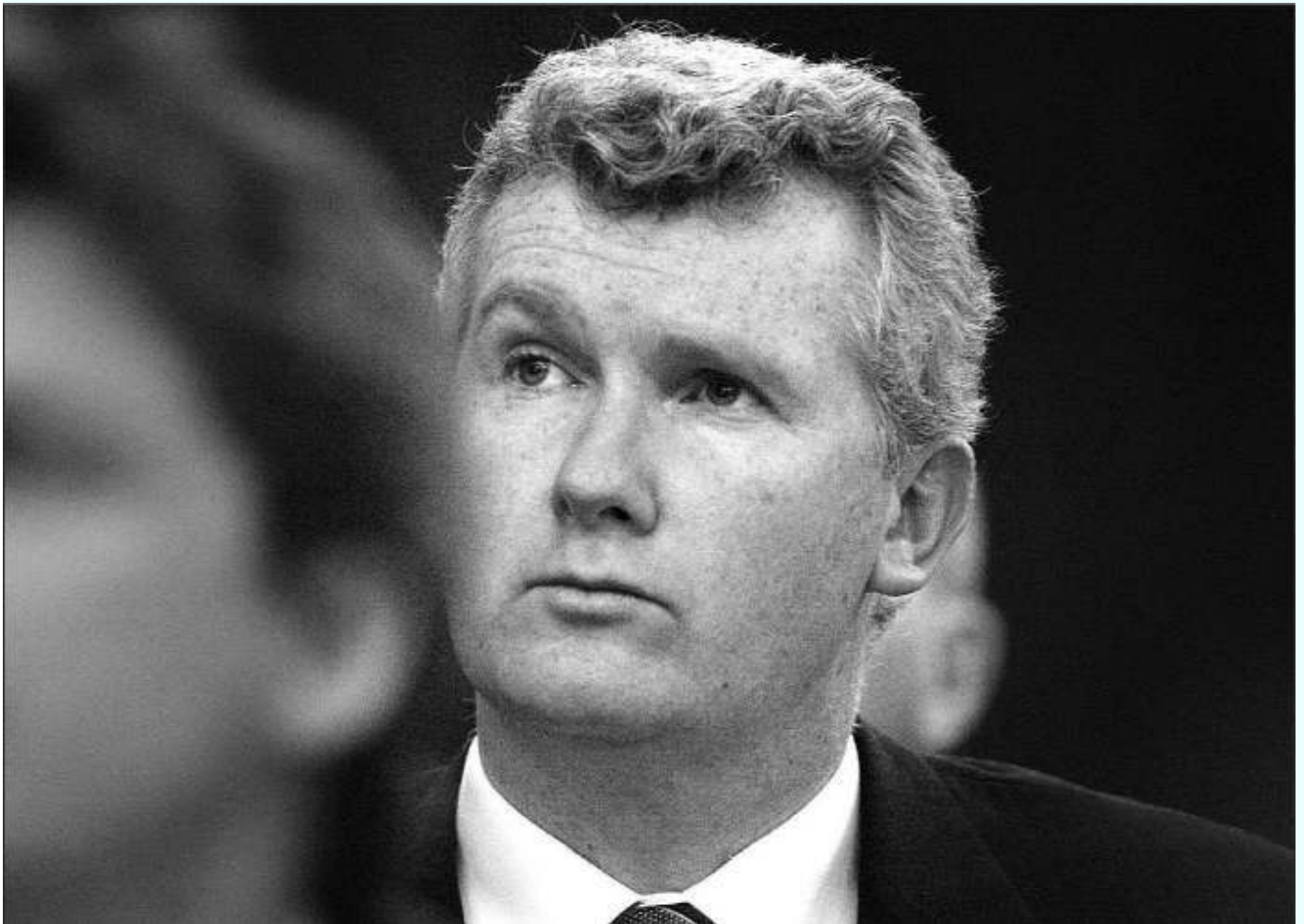
moral argument against genetically modified food when we're facing these sorts of projections on global hunger."

Mr Burke said GM technology won't be the only answer.

"But we need to give farmers every possible tool given the gravity of the challenge."

Australia's farm and fisheries production reached \$37.4 billion in 2008.

Two-thirds of Australia's food produced is exported to countries including to Asian nations, the United States and United Kingdom.



A QUESTION OF SCIENCE: Federal Agriculture Minister Tony Burke says scientific advances are the key to securing world food supplies. He says this will include the use of genetically modified foods.