

Tony Windsor MP

The New England Independent

MARCH 2005

The Official Newsletter of the Independent Federal Member for New England Tony Windsor MP



Perseverance Pays Off - Grace Munro Centre Opens at Bundarra



Former Uralla Shire Councillor, Bruce McLean, one of the driving forces behind the establishment of the Grace Munro Centre at Bundarra, with Tony Windsor and Richard Torbay MP, Member for Northern Tablelands, at the official opening.

Vision New England Summit Progress

In October 2003, I convened the 'Vision New England' Summit held at Armidale. This Summit was attended by over 100 people representing 66 different groups. A second Summit will be held this year.

The following is a brief update.

- **Roads to recovery** – will continue past 2005 at same funding levels plus extra funds for Strategic Regional Road Projects.
- **Passenger rail services** – Armidale's train service maintained.
- **Rural Tertiary Education** – National Centre for Mathematics, Information Technology and Science Teaching at UNE.
- **Rural Health** – Progress being made on the establishment of a Medical School at UNE.
- **Dental Health** – Some dental work now able to be undertaken under Medicare where it is shown to be affecting the health of the patient. As highlighted in the press recently, a lot more needs to be done.
- **Charities Bill** – successful withdrawal of the "misguided" bill from legislative program.
- **Disabilities Services** – A regional committee has been established to progress the ideas expressed at the Summit.
- **Community Transport and Regional Services** – A review has been undertaken and a Co-ordinator has been appointed.
- **Employment** – Government funding support announced for the excellent Aboriginal Employment Strategy to expand its services.
- **Public Liability Insurance and IBNR levy** – State and Federal Governments have passed legislation with regard to tort law reform and Trade Practices Act to limit payouts and therefore stabilise premiums over time.
- **Occupational Health and Safety** – meetings held with employers organised by NSW State Independent MPs Peter Draper and Richard Torbay to raise awareness and initiate action to make the situation more tenable.
- **Telecommunications** – Continued opposition to the full sale of Telstra. To be successful will need the community's continuing support.

To the Electorate

The Election - I was humbled by the overwhelming support given to me at the recent Federal Election. As an Independent, I have always been conscious of the fact that I have been elected to represent the people of the New England Electorate rather than a political party or interest group – Thank you.

The Vision New England Summit - is one such attempt to gather together representatives from the region to discuss common problems and to develop some solutions. An update of the Vision New England Summit can be found on this page. Thanks to all those who have helped in any way to bring about a better New England - from Community groups right through to Government Ministers and their staff.

Sale of Telstra Survey - Surveys of the Electorate regarding the full sale of Telstra have indicated that the vast majority of respondents are against the proposal. I will continue to oppose the sale. Even though the Government will have control of the Senate from July and has clearly indicated that the sale is now back on the agenda, I believe that country people can influence their country representatives in the Senate to truly represent them and stop the sale proceeding. If the country Senators fail to listen to their constituents, it will be at their own peril at the next election. This is why I am conducting another survey on the sale of Telstra so that I can pass on your feelings to these Senators to help them in their representation of you on this matter.

Auslink - National Land Transport Bill

I spoke in support of the Auslink (National Land Transport) Bill 2004 during the passage of this Bill through Parliament. One of the major messages that I pushed was that we do not need to sell Telstra to fund other regional infrastructure developments. This is especially relevant in that the Auslink Bill is partly designed to decrease isolation and increase travel and communication. Telecommunication is sometimes the only avenue to decrease isolation. Infrastructure is important in reducing the tyranny of distance and removes smallness as being a disadvantage.

STOP PRESS
Telstra Survey 2005 Enclosed
Please return by 15 April

Dubbo to Tamworth Gas Pipeline a step closer

The consortium that won the tender to build the pipeline recently announced that the project was due to go ahead towards the end of 2005 and the only thing that could waylay the project would be the lack of support from potential industrial users.

I congratulate the Councils from Mudgee, Coonabarabran, Gilgandra, Coolah, Gunnedah, Quirindi, Parry and Tamworth City (some of which have now merged) for their persistence and ability to work together for the common cause.

In particular, mention should be made of the excellent work done by Margaret Thomas of the Mudgee Business Enterprise Centre, David Adam (consultant to the Project) and Peter Pulley (who chaired the Working Group from inception to the selection of the successful tenderer).

It is now up to communities to support the pipeline and commit to using natural gas.

\$30M for Armidale's Beef Cooperative Research Centre secures a research base for the Region

Professor Bernie Bindon and his team at the Beef CRC are to be congratulated for their recent success in gaining Federal Government Funding to continue their research work in improving the capacity of the beef industry to deliver high quality beef via research into Beef Genetic Technologies.

The research is designed to enhance yields and herd reproductive efficiency and thereby improve the beef industry's ability to compete in the global market.

This is a great boost for the CRC and also a substantial boost for Armidale's reputation as a leading centre of rural research.

I am sure that the team at the CRC will deliver results that will help keep the Australian Industry in the forefront of world markets.

The funding was sourced from the Federal Government's Co-operative Research Centre Program. I would like to thank the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson and the Government for their support for the CRC.

Martin's Gully Public School awarded for Literacy & Numeracy Results

Martin's Gully Public School has recently been awarded a Federal Government cheque for \$2,000.

This was in recognition of the School being named as one of 57 schools across Australia to receive Achievement Awards in the 2004 National Literacy and Numeracy Week Awards.

The Award was a well deserved acknowledgement for consistent high achievement in numeracy over the last two to four years.

The School has had well above average results and the Principal, Michael Hooker, staff and students should be congratulated for their efforts. It is further proof that country schools can compete with the best the school system has to offer.

Ethanol a Viable Fuel Alternative

Gunnedah's ethanol industry still on track- Matthew Kelley, Managing Director of Primary Energy, announced over the Christmas/New Year period that, despite losing their latest bid for federal funding, the company would be proceeding with the project in July or August 2005 subject to signing up the potential customers.

Mr Kelley stated that the key to the plant being built is not its funding but rather it's a matter of obtaining sufficient orders for the product. Almost half the minimum 80% of sales contracts (required for viability) have already been signed or pledged and talks were ongoing with major fuel companies.

As customers are a vital ingredient to any new business, and especially the ethanol industry, it is now imperative that the Government phases in a mandate for 10% usage of ethanol in fuel. The boost to our rural communities would be considerable via the economic activity generated by the grain and sugar producers let alone the employment boost given by the ethanol plants.

Prime Minister keeps door open on ethanol petrol mix- In response to a question I directed to the Prime Minister during Question Time on 15 February regarding mandating for the use of ethanol in petrol, the Prime Minister stated: "if the scientific and other evidence coming before government were to change, I would certainly be willing to change my mind and I am sure my colleagues would be willing to change their minds. We do not have any prejudice against ethanol. We do not have any prejudice against the people who are promoting it".

The challenge for the ethanol industry as a whole is to show the Prime Minister the scientific proof. If this is done the Government is left with no more excuses.

Currently, Australia has to deal in two corrupted markets - the first being the sale of our excess grain on the subsidised world markets and the second being the use of the receipts from those grain sales to purchase oil from an artificial and corrupt world oil market.

Barraba Central School receiving an Australian Flag during a visit to Federal Parliament



Barraba Central School children and teacher Lyn Irving at Parliament House with an Australian Flag flown in Parliament presented by Tony Windsor

Glen Severn Learning Centre Federal funding achieved through Community Commitment and Cooperation

The Glen Severn Learning Centre recently received a Federal Government grant of \$309,000. Whilst this news is not exactly new, it is worth noting some of the reasons why the Glen Severn community achieved success. These are as follows

- Perseverance and persistence.
- A "no" means that the community has to try harder.
- Community co-operation for the good of the wider community.
- Linkages with other organisations thereby creating a working network.
- Staying positive.
- Designing a project for future needs (thinking ahead).
- Willing to accept positive outside help.
- Concentrating on the core objective and staying away from side issues.

No initiative of this significance can achieve success without involvement from many organisations and volunteers. In particular, the following contributors should be recognised:

- The Councils of Glen Innes and Severn Shires (since amalgamated).
- The Liberal Senator for NSW John Tierney (for his support from day one of the project).
- The Area Consultative Committee (for their guidance and assistance with the preparation of the application).
- The New England Institute of TAFE and the University of New England.
- The former Mayors of Glen Innes and Severn Shire Councils, Clr Bob Dwyer and Clr Robert Schroeder and former Mayor of Severn Shire Council, Malcolm Wehr.
- The former Glen Innes Council Administrator, Mr Frank Willan.

Official Duval Creek Bridge Opening



Mayor of Armidale Dumaresq Council, Clr Brian Chetwynd, Tony Windsor MP, Member for New England and Senator Sandy Macdonald, at the official opening of the new Duval Creek Bridge and associated works.

The Australian Local Government Association's submission for a 1% slice of income tax is worth supporting

The request for 1% of tax revenue is recognition of the need for increased investment in local government infrastructure. There is a real need for additional funding on a permanent basis for local government, particularly in country areas where the economics of size don't relate as well to viability as they do in larger populated councils.

The current system of local government funding is clearly archaic and needs modernisation. For too long local government has been exploited by both State and Federal Governments and are expected to do more with less. This cannot last.

Local government has already had a victory when they united to press for the continuation of the Roads to Recovery Program. If all councils supported this submission, change may occur.

Congratulations

Wedding Anniversaries

70th Joseph & Norah Bottom, Manilla
66th Albert & Jean Bell, Tamworth
66th Gordon & Jean Simpson, Tamworth
65th George & Ellen Freestone, Tamworth

60th Wedding Anniversaries

Bruce & Margaret Dowe, Vic & Pauline McKnight, Arnold & Pat Klages, Bram & Marie Davidson, Max & Betty Townsend, Lindsay & Valerie Smith, John & Betty Bourke, Cyril & Mavis Martin, Peter & Joyce Lawrence, Vern & Mary Lewis and John & Muriel Clark. Congratulations also to the dozens of couples who celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversaries over recent months.

109th Birthday

Special congratulations to Mrs Ethel Barrett of Tamworth – what a wonderful achievement!

100th Birthdays

Mrs Ada Pollock, Tamworth
Mr William Kachel, Armidale

Works continue on the New England Highway

A safer New England Highway will result due to the opening of the Duval Creek Bridge and associated realignment. Previous tight bends have also been straightened out.

Both State and Federal Governments are to be congratulated for their involvement with this development, proving yet again the benefits when both tiers of government co-operate.

It is pleasing to see that \$36M has been set aside for the works being carried out at Devil's Pinch and Duval Creek.

A recent NRMA report has highlighted the fact that eight fatalities have occurred within five years on the Glen Innes to Queensland Border section of the Highway.

Work has also started at the Four Mile Creek bridge section between Tenterfield and Glen Innes. The NRMA report could well be used to maintain pressure on governments for a firmer commitment on the Bolivia Hill section.

Parliamentary Sitting Dates 2005

Parliament is due to sit on the following dates:

- MAY:** 10 to 12 (Budget Sitting) and 23 to 26 and 30 to 31 (Budget Estimates)
- JUN:** 1 to 2 (Budget Estimates), 14 to 16 and 20 to 23
- AUG:** 9 to 11 and 15 to 18
- SEP:** 5 to 8 and 12 to 15
- OCT:** 4 to 6, 10 to 13 and 31
- NOV:** 1 to 3 and 28 to 30
- DEC:** 1 and 5 to 8 (if required)

Tamworth's Lyall Green Lodge for Dementia Care Opens



Present at the opening were (from left to right) Alex Shaw, CEO, Royal Freemasons Benevolent Institution of NSW, Doug Campbell, Tony Windsor, Lyall Green OAM and Marina Griffen, Manager, Tamworth Cottage Homes.

The Government's control of the Senate rekindles the sale of Telstra. Will the Nationals lead the 'No Sale of Telstra' debate?

The Government's control of the Senate (from July 1 2005) bodes ill for the control of Telstra via partial Government ownership. More than ever the Government's promise that the sale of Telstra will not lead to any downgrading of service in the bush should be treated with great scepticism.

The publicity surrounding Telstra over the past six months has not led to any positive feeling regarding a completely privatised Telstra.

Some of the recent announcements cause great concern. For instance:

- 'Telstra to cuts thousands of jobs' – Efficiency and staff are a major component of service - this announcement should be a cause for great concern for regional communities who are already worried about the lack of services.
- Customer Network Investigation reports over TWO MILLION faults over the last few years – How is an eradication of thousands of jobs going to help Telstra catch up with the backlog? Is the sale of the rest of Telstra going to solve the problem?
- 'Telstra to end support for Lifeline' - It was only through the intervention of the Prime Minister that Telstra was "encouraged" to reconsider their decision. What would happen if the Government had no control over these sorts of decisions? Would Telstra have taken notice of any government intervention?
- Prime Minister mentions relaxing foreign ownership rule to allow overseas buyers to participate in the further sale of Telstra – Will this open Telstra up for foreign ownership? If this is the case, we should be told. If it is not the case we should be given watertight guarantees that this will not happen. It is not commonly known that present governments cannot bind future governments to a course of action.
- Telstra submission to ACCC champions the market place as an alternative to the current price control agreement – part of the submission was an attempt to ring fence subsidised regional services such as extended local call zones and the cost of access to un-timed local calls. Telstra wants the subsidies paid direct from Treasury. What will be the Government's attitude to this request if Telstra was fully privatised?

Telstra has improved infrastructure for regional communities. The rollout of mobile phone coverage is one such example. The good work that Telstra Country Wide does is another. Will these programs be guaranteed under a fully privatised Telstra driven by getting a return to shareholders rather than providing a service to ALL Australians no matter where they live?

To the Electorate - continued from page 1

Tony McGrane's passing - I was saddened by the death of Tony McGrane OAM, the former Independent State Member for Dubbo. Tony was a great supporter of regional issues and worked tirelessly for his electorate. Tony was not interested in playing politics. He stood for parliament simply to help the citizens of his electorate.

Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry - I was pleased to be reappointed as a member of this Committee for the current parliament. If readers wish to know more about the work undertaken by the Committee, please contact my office.

"No Excuses" Parliament after July 1
This parliamentary term will be interesting with the Government set to take control of the Senate from July 1. The major issues concerning the electorate are still the major issues for the next term of parliament. Broadly, these are better health and education services, the full sale of Telstra, further centralisation of government services, decline of small regional towns, shortage of skilled and unskilled labour and the further decline of our rail system. This parliament really is the "no excuses parliament".

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Interviews

Please contact my office so that an appointment can be arranged. Don't hesitate to inform my staff of your enquiry, as they may be able to assist you on the spot.

The New England Independent

Dear Fellow New England Resident

The Federal Government is currently undertaking a 'scoping study' into the full sale of Telstra with a view to introducing legislation into the Parliament to enable the Government to proceed to a possible sale.

From July 1, 2005, the Coalition Government will control the Senate through the additional vote of the Queensland National Party. Their new Senator elect, Barnaby Joyce, has indicated that he is not fully supportive of the full sale of Telstra and I would like to provide him with a current indication of my Electorate's view on the Government's proposal.

Question 2 is a way for you to tell me about the problems you may be experiencing with your telecommunications services and Question 3 will allow me to advise your service provider of your problem. It is vital that you provide me with your contact details and indicate your service provider/s for each service if you wish to have any problems addressed.

Question 4 is to compare services in town and out of town.

I ask you to take a few minutes to complete this survey so that I can better represent you on this important issue.

Yours faithfully

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

Q1. Do you want the Government to sell off the rest of Telstra?

Yes

No

Q2. Do you have problems with one or more of the following telecommunication services?

Landline Connection: Yes No

Mobile Phone Service: Yes No

Internet Access: Yes No

Broadband Access: Yes No

Cabling and Infrastructure: Yes No

Maintenance of Phone Service: Yes No

Other (Please give details): _____

Q3. Who is/are your telecommunications service provider (s) (Please circle – you may have more than one)

Telstra

Optus

AAPT

Vodaphone

Dodo

Koee

IPrimus

Other _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ Email: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Q4. Do you live on a rural property or in within a town or city

Comments:

FULL SALE OF TELSTRA SURVEY

It's down to the wire for the full sale of Telstra

YOUR OPINION DOES MATTER



TONY WINDSOR B.Ec. MP
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

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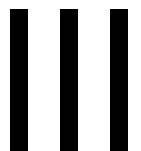
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the form on the reverse side
and make your views known!**

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