

Tony Windsor MP

# The New England Independent

OCTOBER 2005

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



## Tony Windsor addressing Federal Parliament media regarding the Telstra debate



## Telstra Sale - Where are the guarantees?

I recently wrote an open letter to the National Farmers Federation (NFF) and the NSW Farmers' Association about their acceptance of the Government's Telstra sale legislation. I asked Mr Corish, (President of the NFF) if he could point out where in the legislation are the 'guarantees' that he claimed to have sought and received from the Government (in regards to future pricing parity for both telephone and broadband services) and what was the NFF's definition of 'parity'.

When I questioned Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, in Parliament about the NFF's claim of guarantees he referred to a ministerial statement made by the Minister for Communications, Senator Helen Coonan. When the Senator was questioned she referred to an answer she had given the day before which referred only to parity pricing between the city and the country for line rental prices which is NOT basic telephone and broadband services.

In fact the legislation does not guarantee what the NFF has said they needed 'enshrined' in the legislation. There is no such guarantee.

The NSW Farmers' Association has undertaken a great deal of hard work in surveying farmers across the State to find out what their views are in relation to the full sale of Telstra. I have asked Mr Laurie, President of the Association how the Association was, in the space of a week, able to support the NFF's position by supporting the Telstra Sale legislation despite the fact that the Association's members gave clear instructions that they did not want Telstra sold. I further asked Mr Laurie what information and guarantees were given to him and whether he checked to see if these guarantees were enshrined in the legislation or were they just ministerial statements designed to encourage support from umbrella groups that speak on behalf of Australia's rural sector.

The simple question is where is the 'enshrined guarantee' in the legislation?

The simple answer is that there is none.

## To the Electorate

The last few months have been a very interesting and challenging time in Federal Parliament. For the first time in over 25 years a parliamentary party/coalition has a majority in the Senate.

During this period I introduced a Private Members Bill being the Fuel Quality Standards (Ethanol Content) Amendment Bill 2005, which is designed to mandate 10% use of ethanol in petrol over a ten-year period. The oil companies will never do it voluntarily.

The Higher Education Support Amendment (Abolition of Compulsory Up-front Student Union Fees) Bill 2005 has been introduced into the Parliament. The concern with this Bill is the fallout for regional universities regarding the amenities that students currently enjoy such as sporting infrastructure, recreation facilities and student support services. I moved an amendment designed to protect these services.

The fight for Telstra goes on. Without getting too technical, the enabling legislation does not mean that the Government will proceed to the full sale prior to the next election in 2007 as the price of the shares may not be what the Government wants. A large percentage of the shares could still stay in Government ownership. As a result, there are a number of opportunities to have the process reversed. Country people could have a chance to vote on the Telstra sale issue at the next election.

In this Newsletter you will find a summary of the recent Vision New England Summit, which brought together 100 people from 60 community organisations. The Summit has shown that community leaders have positive ideas and solutions to a range of problems that could be implemented to enhance their communities. I thank all who contributed and look forward to working with the groups and individuals in the pursuit of bringing the 57 resolutions to fruition.

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Tony Windsor".

## Reduction of nuisance phone calls

The 500 members of the Australian Direct Marketing Association have a free service to help in the reduction of direct marketing calls and correspondence. The Association includes banks, insurance companies, publishers, catalogue and mail order companies, charities and others who offer their services through mediums such as mail, telephone, the Internet and mobile phones.

Anybody interested in this service can complete the on-line form at [www.adma.com.au](http://www.adma.com.au) or send a request by mail to the following address:

ADMA-Do Not Contact Service  
Reply Paid 464  
Kings Cross NSW 1340

To opt out of services you must provide your complete details and the medium/s that you wish to opt out of so that the Association can action your request. This service does not include removal from lists of companies of which you are a current customer and does not cover the registration of business information.

## Tribute to the late Stan Cole AM

The late Stan Cole, former Mayor of Tamworth, was a very kind hearted and committed person. He dedicated his life to the betterment of his beloved Tamworth district and in a variety of ways he touched the hearts of many people from all walks of life.

He was a truly great Australian who was genuinely concerned about the well being of other people and whose work within the community will continue to benefit the Tamworth region for many years to come.

## School visits are an important aid in helping students understand the working of Parliament



Pupils from William Cowper School (Tamworth) during a recent visit to the National Parliament.

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Interviews: - Please contact my office so that an appointment can be arranged. In addition, please inform my staff of your enquiry, as they may be able to help you.

## Congratulations

### 60th Wedding Anniversaries

William & Heather Marcroft  
Alfred & Elsie Knight  
David & Emily Loader  
Douglas & Una Carmichael  
Arthur & Joyce McLennan  
Frank & Margaret King  
Frank & Dawne Irwin  
Doug & Olive Plante  
Alfred & Catherine Giles  
Arthur & Hilda Myers  
Cecil & Marjory Walls  
Arthur & Dawn Schubert  
Jim & Margaret Brown  
David & Stella Ashdown

### 70th Wedding Anniversaries

Jack and Pauline Bell 24th April 2005

### 100th Birthdays

Mrs. Aileen Betts 6th May 2005

Congratulations to the above people for reaching such impressive personal milestones.

I would also like to congratulate the dozens of couples throughout the Electorate who have recently celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversaries and those who have turned 90 over recent months.

### Reminder

If you know anyone celebrating a special milestone, please notify my office 6-8 weeks prior to the event so that congratulatory messages can be arranged.

## Werris Creek Rail Monument to open

The Werris Creek Rail Monument commemorating those employees who lost their lives whilst working on Australia's railways was opened on the October long weekend.

Once again this project shows what small communities can do if they work together for a common purpose.

The NSW Government is also to be congratulated for backing this project.

The 150th Anniversary of rail in NSW was celebrated on 26th September 2005. The current network is a sad reminder of a more glorious past.

## Funding for Murrurundi Tunnel planning

The recent announcement by the then Acting Prime Minister, John Anderson, of a \$1M planning study for the upgrade of the Murrurundi Rail Tunnel at Ardglen is a step in the right direction regarding this essential piece of regional infrastructure.

For years now the Murrurundi Range Tunnel has caused bottlenecks in the New England Northwest rail system.

The proposed upgrade will make the Newcastle and Sydney rail infrastructure more accessible to the proposed Inland Rail Route (from Brisbane and Melbourne). It becomes even more urgent with the upsurge of coal exploration in the Boggabri /Gunnedah basin and new coalmines such as the open cut mine at Werris Creek commencing operation.

Unlike the previous reports which have not been made available to the public and have not resulted in any progress to this urgently needed upgrade I am hopeful that this time the process will be transparent and will lead to work starting on the upgrade.

## Progress or lack of it in the ethanol debate

The benefits of ethanol in petrol are becoming clearer by the day.

Not only will a viable ethanol industry underpin Australia's grain prices, thereby leading to improved economic conditions in rural and regional Australia, it will also lead to import replacement (of imported oil) and a lessening reliance on the grain export market. An added benefit is that greenhouse gases will also be reduced.

For instance, a recent CSIRO report on the proposed Primary Energy ethanol plant at Gunnedah indicates that the annual reduction in greenhouse gases from just one ethanol plant is the equivalent of removing up to 70,000 cars from Australian roads.

This is further evidence that the Government and wider community should support the mandating of ethanol in petrol.

## Red Nose Day launch in Parliament



Raising funds for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) - Tony on Red Nose Day. Charity days are an important part of our community's social infrastructure.

## Around the Electorate

### Challenge Armidale receives \$42,854

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has supplied funding via the Veteran and Community Grants program to enable Challenge Armidale to establish a lawn mowing and garden maintenance service for the veteran community in Armidale.

I congratulate Challenge Armidale for continuing to seek out and achieve positive outcomes through their business activities.

### United community wins funding for Armidale Streetbeat Project

The Department of Justice and Customs has supplied \$470,000 to the Armidale Streetbeat Project coordinated by the Regional Extended Family Services (REFS) Inc.

The Project is aimed at reducing juvenile crime and anti-social behavior in Armidale. Over 20 community groups have been involved in showing yet again what can be accomplished if the whole community can get behind a project.

Two experienced youth workers will be engaged in a 'cross-cultural' collaborative model providing a critical front line link between agencies and young people involved in recidivistic, antisocial or crime related behavior.

### New England rail route

A submission has been made to the Inquiry into the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Rail Link route for that Inquiry to include the New England Railway line in the overall concept.

Thank you to all those who have made contributions to this submission, particularly the Glen Innes Council 355 Committee chaired by Richard Rowe. This Committee is working to promote the New England Route as the best way north.

### High School Certificate

By the time this newsletter has been delivered HSC students will be well into their study vacation. This is an important time in the life of Year 12 students. I wish all students all the very best during the coming weeks and in their future endeavours.

## Around the Electorate

### Hard work pays off for New England Hockey

Congratulations to New England Hockey in their success in obtaining \$150,000 funding from the Regional Partnerships Program to enable them to establish an artificial hockey surface and complex on their site at the University of New England.

All levels of government have been supportive with the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation contributing \$300,000 and the Armidale Dumaresq Council contributing \$360,000.

The construction of the complex will provide New England Hockey with first class facilities for local players and importantly they will be able to host major championships and host the influx of visitors that come with these sporting events.

### Tamworth, Armidale and Glen Innes RSL Sub-Branches receive Commonwealth BEST Grants

Three RSL Sub-Branches have recently received advice from the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon De-Anne Kelly that they would receive grants under the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) program. The program offers funding to Ex-Service organisations to employ pension officers and advocates and provides office equipment and other resources.

Sub-Branch	Description	Amt \$
Tamworth	Salaries part time incl support	26,302
	Internet access	385
	Consumables	9,000
Armidale	Salaries part time incl support	18,200
	Internet access	350
	Telephone expenses	400
Glen Innes	Internet access	300
<b>Total</b>		<b>54,937</b>

### Coal makes a comeback

**Good news for Werris Creek** - The new Werris Creek coalmine delivered its first trainload of coal on the week ending 1st September. This project has boosted employment in Werris Creek. The company is to be congratulated for the time it has taken to get the project up and running.

**Ashford study being done** - A new study is being undertaken to see if there could be renewed interest in this coal reserve.

## Federal funding for Local Government welcome

The recent announcement of \$30M (2005-2006) for local roads and other local government services through Federal Government funding is welcome. The Local Government Financial Assistance grants help councils to provide the high quality services that local communities need and expect.

The grants are untied so the councils can allocate funds according to local priorities and are used for a wide range of services and infrastructure.

I would like to thank the Minister for Local Government, Territories and Roads, the Hon Jim Lloyd and the Federal Government for its continued direct support of local government via these grants.

The following table provides a summary of the grants to councils within the New England Electorate:

Local Gov. Area	2005/2006 Estimate Entitlement		
	General Purpose \$	Roads \$	Total general purpose and roads \$
Armidale Dumaresq council	2,200,127	941,590	3,141,717
Glen Innes Severn Council	1,692,352	909,324	2,601,676
Guyra Shire	960,516	640,181	1,600,697
Gwydir Shire	1,545,450	1,333,530	2,878,980
Inverell Shire	2,476,118	1,392,791	3,868,909
Liverpool Plains	1,351,284	924,874	2,276,158
Tamworth Regional Council	5,251,031	2,717,428	7,968,459
Tenterfield Shire	1,672,997	1,150,403	2,823,400
Uralla Shire	965,394	647,260	1,612,654
Walcha Shire	669,016	589,171	1,258,187
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,784,285</b>	<b>11,246,552</b>	<b>30,030,837</b>

## Further school visits



Emily Roberts and Amelia Bridge, Captains of Kentucky Primary School, with Sorcha Harrop and Gabrielle Norbury, Captains of NEGS Primary School, with Tony Windsor at a recent visit to Federal Parliament.

## Report on the recent Vision New England Summit

### Vision New England Summit - An overview

Over 100 participants attended the recent Vision New England Summit from 60 organisations representing most aspects of the New England's community life. Some 57 resolutions were agreed upon.

Health and disability services appeared to be among the most important concerns. Other important issues raised included discussions on Telstra, the Youth Insearch Program and the region's skills shortage and infrastructure development.

The Youth Insearch Program as presented by Tamworth Magistrate Mal MacPherson probably received the greatest support by the delegates followed closely by the Telstra NO SALE issue.

Much of the discussion revolved around the link between infrastructure type projects and the social and cultural factors that make our region.

Importantly, the Summit provided details of the community's desires so that their elected representatives can pursue their wishes on behalf of the electorate. The final document will be circulated to all other elected representatives at the Local, State and Federal levels.

I would like to thank all participants who submitted their issues and all those who attended the Summit. I will report back regularly via news releases and through this newsletter.

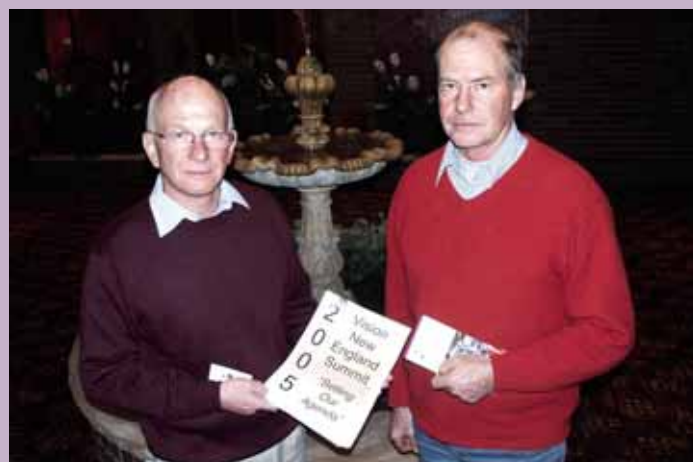
**New England Summit Items** - The following items are brief summaries of the full range of discussions and resolutions. For more detailed information please contact Tony Windsor's office or log on to the web site. Contact details can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

### Help for troubled young lives via the Youth Insearch Program



Harry Durey, Immediate Past District Governor of Rotary District 9650 and Malcolm MacPherson, Tamworth Magistrate and Youth Insearch Committee member for Rotary District 9650 shown with a copy of the Youth Insearch document.

### Shortage of professional services



Dr Michael Jones, N & NW Divisional representative of the Australian Dental Association with Dr Peter Bagshaw, President, New England Branch of the Australian Veterinary Association.

#### 1 - HEALTH

- Population-based colorectal cancer screening program.
- Isolated Patient's Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme funding requirements and distance based travel.
- Skin cancer and the need for better community and General Practitioner education and training.
- Support for a range of support mechanisms for smokers trying to quit.
- Incentives to General Practitioners working in inland regional cities.
- Succession planning assistance to rural GPs.
- Development of an interagency model to recruit, support and retain an allied health practitioner workforce.
- Reduction of paperwork for families when traveling and visiting specialists/others concerning the treatment of the disability of their child.
- Mental Health issues - the lack of sufficient staff, allied health professionals and adequate financial resources.
- Adequate living skills programs and support services needed to support independent living for people with disabilities.
- More intense support to retain and attract rural dentists.

#### 2 - EDUCATION

- The establishment of a full Medical School in the New England Region and a feasibility study into the establishment of a Rural Medical School as a joint venture of the UNE, Southern Cross University and Charles Sturt University.
- That similar solutions as used to attract country students to Medical Colleges be used to attract country students to dentistry.
- The establishment of a regional University Department of Rural Dentistry.

#### 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

- The summit reaffirmed its opposition to the full sale of Telstra (this resolution was originally supported at the first Vision New England Summit.)
- Funding for regional ABC to provide improved services equal in quality, consistency and availability to services available in urban Australia.
- Transparency for election of the ABC Management Board and at least one rural/regional representative on the Board.

## Homelessness & related social issues



Community support worker, Annette Miller, and Crisis Worker, Debbie Smith, both from the Tamworth Women's Refuge, were involved in discussions regarding community services.

### 4 - COMMUNITY SERVICES

- Funding to Advocacy Northwest for the appointment of an accommodation support worker.
- The establishment of a Family Relationship Centre to service the region.
- Cease discriminating legislation against tenants with mental illnesses, disabilities, large families and Indigenous tenants.
- Youth Insearch Camps and other associated programs to be better supported.
- Improvements in face-to-face client legal services, including the need to provide outreach services.

### 5 - SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- That accessible capital infrastructure funding for arts related facilities continues to be a high priority for Government.
- That Regional Arts Funding be increased annually to enable better distribution to the many regional and rural community-based and volunteer arts organisations.

### 6 - OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Extra road transport funding and resources are needed for enforcement and education of drivers.
- A code of practice is an essential requirement for the Road Transport Industry.
- Concern was expressed regarding the impact of the Federal Government's changes to rates of pay and safety negotiations.

### 7 - DISABILITY SERVICES

- Discussion and resolutions centered on recurrent funding problems for the various programs, development of Best Practice models, efficiency of the current processes, funding and accountability for the administering government department, more flexibility in the programs and improved wheelchair access.

### 8 - SKILL SHORTAGES

- The establishment of an Industry Assistance Program which will enable regional industries to specify the skill sets needed in their workplace.
- The mechanism for defining the industry-training standards should be comprehensively overhauled.
- A comprehensive overhaul of the mechanism for issuing Certificates of Vocational Skill Competence is needed to eliminate fraudulent practices and watered down standards of assessment.

### 9 - GOVERNMENT SERVICES

- The need for a sustainable funding strategy for the Roads to Recovery program so that local governments can confidently plan for the future.
- Legislation to be enacted that will bind all arms of government to a social impact of any of their management plans on rural and regional communities.

### 10 - TAXATION

- Self-funded retirees holding the Commonwealth Seniors Health Card to receive an annual Government payment, subject to certain conditions.
- Capital Gains Tax reduction for self-funded retirees and others living on a limited budget.
- Economic Zone legislation to be developed for a defined period.
- All tiers of government to develop a sustainability funding strategy for public assets.
- That the tax scales should be revised to take into account the current earning and purchasing power of taxpayers, and then indexed to the CPI.

### 11 - RURAL ISSUES

Discussion and resolutions centered on the following points;

- 10% use of ethanol in petrol be mandated and scaled up over a ten-year period.
- Exceptional circumstance assistance should be reviewed to look at the timeliness of the granting and the program's possible expansion.
- A feasibility study is needed with the aim to establish a natural disaster fund with more flexible criteria as to who can apply.

### 13 - TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

**Rail** - The summit supported;

- The proposal for a direct railway link between Melbourne and Brisbane together with the inclusion of the Northern New England Tablelands Rail Line option.
- The establishment of Glen Innes as a railway hub.
- The immediate upgrade of the Ardglen tunnel to be undertaken following the completion of the planning process.

**Roads** -

- Funding to be undertaken on the realignment of the New England Highway at Bolivia Hill, Puddledock Road-New England Highway intersection and the Tenterfield Heavy Vehicle Bypass Study.
- The NRMA's Better Roads Panel's discussion paper was supported and the Panel is to be contacted to suggest various regional initiatives and alternatives.
- Roads to Recovery program should become an ongoing program so that local councils can confidently plan future works and government services.
- Support Legislation that will bind all arms of government to the social impact of any of their management plans on rural and regional communities.

## Medical Solutions



Professor Peter Flood, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Development at UNE) with Tony Windsor discussing education solutions for regionally based medical students.