

# Tony Windsor MP

The New England Independent

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

June 2007

## Inter-Regional Group responds to Murrurundi Tunnel Report



The Hunter New England North West Inter-Regional Group met recently to discuss and formulate a response to the Australian Rail Track Corporation's Report into the proposed Murrurundi Rail Tunnel upgrade.

Attending the meeting were (left to right) Doug Parish (CEO Hunter Business Chamber), Andrew Geddes (Director Hunter Business Chamber), Gai Swain (Mayor of Gunnedah), Tony Windsor, Tony Galligan & Keith Ross (Whitehaven Mine) and John Brien (Glen Innes Severn 355 Transport Committee) discussing the Murrurundi Rail Tunnel upgrade proposal.

## Australia's Public Dental Services Sadly Lacking

There are three basic problems to be solved before the above situation can be turned around. These are as follows:

- The failure to train dentists for an ever-expanding population.
- The failure to train enough dentists to replace the numbers that are retiring.
- The problem of attracting young professionals to regional Australia.

The Budget went some way to improving the situation by promising to create a regionally based dental school.

Therefore, the recent announcement by the UNE that they were exploring the feasibility of establishing a regionally based dental school is welcome news and, if successful, should go a long way to overcoming the above problems.

However, this will not reduce the current waiting lists as the Budget only allows for dental treatment through Medicare in limited circumstances. Why dental ill health should be excluded from Medicare is a complete mystery.



## To the Electorate

### Election year Budget brings broad rewards

The \$10.6B Budget surplus has allowed the Government room to make more announcements in the lead up to the election later this year.

The Budget has been good to a broad spectrum of the community with tax cuts for low income earners, increased child care assistance, education programs, broad brush infrastructure funding announcements, one-off bonuses for older Australians and carers as well as improved aged care initiatives and environment programs.

I am very pleased to see Federal funding is to be released for the new Medical School at the University of New England in conjunction with the University of Newcastle. I congratulate all involved with the development of the project which was first raised and supported at the 2003 Vision New England Summit.

I anticipate that funding for works on the New England Highway (particularly the Tenterfield bypass and Bolivia Hill Realignment) will be announced as part of the election promises as well as more funding for further investigation of the north-south rail link between Brisbane and Melbourne.

The upgrade of Chaffey Dam should also get a guernsey despite some political games being played.

I will shortly be sending you a survey to gauge your views on a number of issues including climate change and our future energy sources, food advertising and other issues.

I ask you to let me know how you feel on these issues so that I can represent your views in the Parliament.

Signature of Tony Windsor

Tony Windsor MP  
Member for New England

## Around the Electorate

### Bio Fuels opportunities in New England

A meeting was recently convened by Inverell Councillor, John Irvine, to look at the opportunities for bio fuel production in the Inverell district.

This was followed up by another meeting hosted by the Glen Innes Natural Resource Advisory Committee and addressed by Dr David Lamb – Low Emissions Transport Leader with the CSIRO. I also briefed the meeting on my visit to the USA last year where I investigated bio fuel production and distribution.

Despite the current drought, all avenues of alternative fuels and carbon emission reduction should continue to be investigated.

### UNE receives \$2.5M for upgrade of Robb College

The recent announcement by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop, that UNE is to receive \$2.5M to go towards the upgrade of Robb College is extremely pleasing for all concerned. The funds will ensure that UNE will be able to continue to offer excellent on Campus accommodation.

### Rural roads upgrades

Congratulations to Gwydir and Tenterfield Councils on the announcement of funding for the upgrade of the road between Bingara and Pilliga and for the Legume to Woodenbong link road respectively.



### Tony Windsor presenting a Certificate of Appreciation to Mitchell Achurch in recognition of his recent service to Australia during peace operations in East Timor.

### \$292,000 invested in the New England Electorate's Catholic Schools

Following funding of \$1.9M for Public Schools in my Electorate (detailed in the February Newsletter), \$292,000 has been made available to six Catholic Schools in the Electorate. These are as follows;

|                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| St Mary's, Armidale            | \$35,000 |
| St Mary's of Angels, Guyra     | \$55,000 |
| St Joseph's School, Glen Innes | \$46,000 |
| St Joseph's, Tenterfield       | \$55,000 |
| St Edward's Primary, Tamworth  | \$46,000 |
| St Joseph's, Barraba           | \$55,000 |

The Government is to be congratulated for their assistance which now brings the total since late last year up to \$2.237M.

**Readers are encouraged to seek further information regarding the articles in the Newsletter by visiting**

**[www.tonywindsor.com.au](http://www.tonywindsor.com.au)**

**or contacting my office by phone, fax or email (see back page for numbers/address).**

### Glen Innes Minerama Festival



## Greg Maguire referred to Privileges Committee

Following a letter from Senator Andrew Murray and Senator Michael Forshaw to the President of the Senate with regard to possible offences by Mr Greg Maguire, a witness before the Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships and Sustainable Regions Programs, the Senate has agreed to refer the matter to the Committee of Privileges.

The motion unanimously agreed to was: "Having regard to the material presented to the Senate by the President on 6 February 2007, whether any false or misleading evidence was given to a Senate committee, whether there was any improper refusal to provide information to a committee and whether any contempt was committed in that regard."

Senators Murray and Forshaw indicate in their letter requesting referral to the Privileges Committee, "At a wider level, we have grave concerns that Mr Maguire's continued refusal to respond to repeated approaches from the committee in performing its work but also sets a potentially damaging precedent for witnesses appearing before parliamentary committees. This is not a matter of partisan politics but a matter of upholding the powers and privileges of the Senate and its committees. If allowed to go unchecked, Mr Maguire's conduct may set an example for witnesses who feel they can use and flout committee process with impunity."

## New England Local Government Group's submission for the North-South Inland Rail Route.

The main conclusion of the NELG submission is that whilst \$1B was to be spent on the New England rail corridor section, it is \$400M cheaper than the alternative route further to the West.

There was no mention of funding for the project in the Budget, however I believe there will be an announcement made in the lead up to the election. I trust it will be a genuine attempt to progress this matter and further trust that the New England alternative is given serious consideration.

Glen Innes' Minerama, held in March each year, is the largest gem, mineral and craft festival in NSW. Features of the Festival include displays of mining machinery, exhibitions of arts and crafts related to mining, minerals, gems, fossils and fossicking as well as demonstrations of stone cutting and creating jewellery from gem stones.

Pictured at the Festival are the Mayor of Glen Innes, Cr Steve Toms, Tony Windsor, Patrick O'Brien of Woolgoolga (winner of the Minerama Tailgaters) and the Speaker of the NSW Parliament and Member for the Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay, MP.

## Yetman lobbying for a mobile phone tower

The Government guarantee given when the full sale of Telstra was approved that 'country people would have equitable access to communication services including telephone and broadband' seems not to apply to many small communities like Yetman.

Recently I attended a meeting between representatives of the Yetman Community and Telstra to discuss a mobile phone tower for Yetman.

Telstra is now a public company so they are committed to a commercial return for their shareholders. Equally, Yetman is committed to obtaining a mobile phone tower. It now appears that to gain the tower, the Yetman community will have to contribute funds. Under the Government's 'Guarantee' Yetman should have equitable access. This does not appear to be happening.

## Police Awards

Pictured at the New England LAC award presentation in Glen Innes were (back row) Acting Insp Laurie Cattell, Snr Const Jaime Porter, Sgt David Cooper, Snr Const Ben Howard, Snr Const Steven Brown (Tenterfield) Insp George McGilvray, (front) Cr Steve Toms, Tony Windsor, Assistant Commissioner Steve Bradshaw, Supt David Cushway and Richard Torbay.

Congratulations to all Award recipients and all police officers for the work they undertake in the community. *(Photo courtesy of Glen Innes Examiner).*



## Liverpool Plains mining study knock back must be revisited

Despite the Prime Minister indicating that he was 'interested in understanding the impact of mining on aquifers and water systems' and indicating in October last year that he would report back on the issues, as yet he has not satisfactorily done so.

Meanwhile, the decision not to go ahead with an independent study remains.

Surely research needs to be done before mining targets are to be put in place. After all, the PM has recently criticised Kevin Rudd about setting emission targets before doing the research into the economic impact. Surely 'what's good for the goose should be good for the gander'.

## Tamworth Meals on Wheels receive \$561,000 from Regional Partnerships

Over 240 meals a day are currently prepared in the Tamworth Meals on Wheels facility. This is expected to increase dramatically as demand increases from the growing aged community. The funds are to help the organisation construct and fit out a new kitchen to meet the ever increasing demand.

## Saving postal service for Ashford - \$30,745 from Regional Partnerships

Ashford was in danger of losing its Post Office which services approx 1,500 people from the town and surrounding district. The funding has enabled the Ashford Business Council to purchase the Licensed Post Office and relocate the service to the Ashford Rural Transaction Centre. Congratulations to the Ashford Business Council on their continuing commitment to their local community.

## Around the Electorate

### Telstra's Broadband upgrade for Tamworth and Armidale.

Telstra Country Wide's recent announcement of a major upgrade of its broadband network within Tamworth and Armidale is welcome.

By enabling the main exchanges to ADSL 2+, Internet speeds will be increased up to 20 Mbps to users on the main exchange and the upgrading on a number of other exchanges to 2Mbps. In the not too distant future some other exchanges will also be upgraded to ADSL 2+.

### Sunnyside New England Highway realignment update

A further \$800,000 was announced in the Budget to continue the planning and preconstruction activities for the New England Highway – Sunnyside Realignment project with another \$7.3M allocated for the commencement of construction in 2008-09.

Other road funding confirmed through the Strategic Regional Roads Programme includes \$850,000 for the Legume to Woodenbong Road to replace two bridges - one of 37 Electorates out of 150 Australia wide - increasing the amount in this year's Budget to approximately \$1.9M for this major link road project in the Tenterfield Shire Council area.

\$6M for the Coonamble to Bingara Road will see approximately half spent in the New England Electorate, sealing 17 kms of the road between Bingara and Narrabri – a real boost for tourist and economic use of the route.

I thank Roads Minister Jim Lloyd and the Government for their recognition and support of these projects.

## Australian Defence Medal presentation

Earlier this year I had the pleasure of presenting a number of veterans with the Australian Defence Medal at a ceremony held in Tamworth. Further presentations are planned for Glen Innes and Tamworth in coming months.

Recognition of service either in Australia or overseas is an important way of saying thank you from the community.



## Government listens to wheat growers

Results of my recent survey of wheat growers indicated that 82% of growers wanted a single desk and 62% wanted AWB and AWB International to be separated. The survey results were given to the Government.

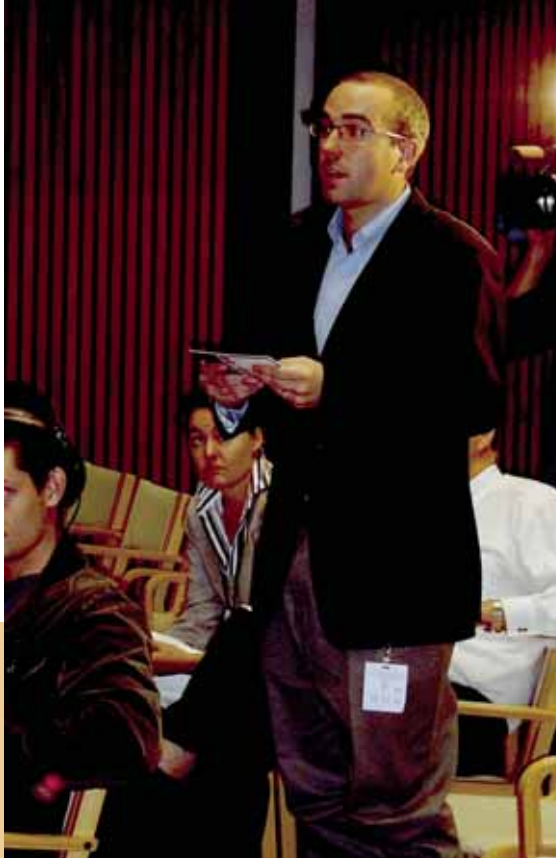
I am pleased that the Government has listened to the wheat growers with their recent announcement that the above scenario is exactly what they are planning for the industry.

I thank the nearly 3,500 growers for their input to the survey.

With the results of the survey to guide them, the Government has acted responsibly.

## A politician's life is not all serious

Julian Morrow from The ABC's 'Chasers War on Everything' having a joke at my expense during the press conference detailing the results of my wheat growers survey.



## Taxation issue for ground water compensation still not solved

So far, despite assurances to the contrary, the question of taxation of compensation to ground water users is still not solved. The Prime Minister's \$10B ten year water plan still only refers to five key areas for targeted works and still refers to 'structural adjustment assistance' for the buy back of water entitlements rather than compensation. This still leaves such payments in the air as to how they will be treated for taxation purposes. As mentioned in my previous newsletter, if tax has to be paid, in some cases the Commonwealth will claw back almost all the funds that they have given out through taxation. This is patently unfair. I will keep pressing the Government to review this problem and exclude the payments from taxation.

## UNE Medical School gets go ahead

I am very pleased that the Education Minister Julie Bishop has indicated that the Australian Government will release its funding commitment to allow the University of New England and the University of Newcastle to progress their plans to open their new medical school next year. It appears that the Commonwealth has seen good sense and will not hold up the development of the program that will see 60 medical students trained at the UNE with practical work to take place at the Tamworth, Armidale and Taree Hospitals.

I congratulate the initiators of the project, Prof Victor Minichiello, Prof Peter Flood, Debra Panizzon and Dr John Kleeman, who first spoke on the proposal at the Vision New England Summit in 2003, gaining the support of all regional groups to push for its establishment.

It will be a great asset to increasing the number of doctors who will want to practice in country Australia and further enhance the reputation of the University of New England as being a leader in its field.

## CDMA switch off

Telstra's timetable and the process for the switching off of the CDMA mobile phone network and replacing it with their Next G network needs some close scrutiny.

The Prime Minister appears to be reluctant to make a definitive statement on this important issue for country people.

Residents in country areas remember the debacle in mobile phone communication when the analogue system was switched off in favour of the GSM or digital system, the coverage of which was extremely lacking in country areas.

That's why the CDMA system was established.

Now we have Telstra wanting to switch off the CDMA system and from what has been said at Senate Estimates hearings, the process for deciding on 'equivalence of service' may be 'dodgy'.

Country people don't want to go through the analogue experience again. Once bitten – twice shy!

## Congratulations

Congratulations to the following people who have celebrated or will be celebrating their special Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries during the period March 2007 to June 2007.

### 60th Wedding Anniversaries

Max & Joan Taylor, Armidale  
Neville & Norma Sutton, Manilla  
Ken & Eileen Hayward, Tamworth  
Mr & Mrs James Mahoney, Tamworth  
Ross & Peg Tully, Armidale  
John & Mary Hodge, Glen Innes  
Douglas & Barb Thompson, Tamworth  
Ellis & Regina Coxhead, Nemingha  
Leslie & Joyce Gilbert, Inverell  
Charles & Mary Findley, Emmaville  
Noel & Joyce Thibault, Tamworth  
Allen & Shirley Thompson, Tamworth  
George & Betty Swain, Tamworth  
John & Yvonne Krumin, Inverell  
Rupert & Sheila Neilson, Quirindi

### 90th Birthdays

Mrs Doris Ferris, Walcha  
Mrs Mildred Payne, Tamworth  
Mrs Belle Erickson, Werris Creek  
Mrs Edith Stiles, Tamworth  
Mr Lloyd Swain, Tamworth  
Mrs Mary McLachlan, Glen Innes  
Mrs Joyce Magill, Tamworth  
Mr Cecil Bennett, Guyra

### 95th Birthdays

Mrs Thelma Mundy, Tamworth  
Mrs Isabella Bartholomew, Armidale

### 100th Birthdays

Mr Allan Phillips, Armidale  
Mrs Ethel Stevens, Glen Innes  
Mr Fergus O'Sullivan, Tamworth  
Mrs Edith Madrick, Walcha  
Mrs Elizabeth Crook, Armidale  
Mrs Doris Penrose, Tamworth  
Mrs Violet Fenton, Inverell

## Contact details

Toll free 1300 301 839  
Address Shop 5/259 Peel St  
Tamworth NSW 2340  
Post PO Box 963  
Tamworth NSW 2340  
Phone (02) 6761 3080  
Fax (02) 6761 3380  
Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au  
www.tonywindsor.com.au

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