

Tony Windsor MP

The New England Independent

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

September 2007

New Westpac Rescue Helicopter for New England/North West Region

The new BK-117 twin engine helicopter replaces the single engine helicopter that served the region so well until its recent accident whilst on one of its many urgent missions.

The new machine has more safety features, better equipment, larger internal space, improved radar, dual GPS and a range of other features that will further enhance this great community service.



Peter Draper, State MP for Tamworth, the Hon Richard Torbay, Speaker and State MP for Northern Tablelands, and Tony Windsor MP, congratulate the Chairman of the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service, Mr Cliff Marsh OAM on the delivery of the BK-117 helicopter.

New England Electorate Survey Says "No" to Nuclear Power Stations

Recently I asked the Electorate (via a survey) "Do you want Australia to build nuclear power stations?"

The result of the survey clearly indicated that of the 3,576 residents that responded 67% indicated that they do not want Australia to go down the nuclear energy path. Comments from respondents indicated that people have grave concerns for the safe storage of nuclear waste as well as for the safe operation of the power stations. Other comments were that there are other alternatives which haven't been fully explored and developed that would be safer for the environment such as geothermal power generation, clean coal technology and gas generation.

The subsequent announcement by the Government that the regions would have a say as to whether their locality would be the site of a nuclear power station is a welcome step in the right direction.

The Government announced in the last Budget the establishment of the "Centre for Climatic Change Adaptation" to bring together scientists and decision makers to develop strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and developing low emission technologies. Perhaps the Government could use this Centre to better focus on the issue.



To the Electorate

Constitutional Change Would Bring a Better Deal to Country Australians

I was recently very honoured to be invited to deliver the 2007 Earle Page College Politics Lecture at the University of New England. The topic I chose was "Country Independence – the way forward".

I believe that greater independence from capital cities via the abolition of the States and the recognition of regional governments (that have clear financial structures and access to income growth) would generate far better results for country Australians.

Our Constitution was devised over 100 years ago to meet the needs of our fledgling Nation. Times have changed and we should review our Constitution so that it better reflects current times and the needs of all Australians.

I also spoke about the need for independence of the country vote.

The country vote, which makes up approximately 30% of the total vote, needs to become unaligned to the major parties.

If country people banded together in a block, they would be the 'biggest minority in town' and would have a much greater influence on policy.

Country people need the same services that city dwellers take for granted.

If they realised their political power by having parliamentary representatives who were not bound to one side of politics or other then I'm sure country people would see a lot more than trinkets dangled in front of them each time an election comes around. The transcript of my speech is available from my website.

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

Around the Electorate

Three Electorate RSL Sub Branches Receive Grants Totalling \$58,000

Tamworth, Armidale and Uralla will receive grants from the Building Excellence in Support and Training (BEST) programme. This programme is administered by the Department of Veterans' Affairs and is designed to employ pension officers and advocates as well as provide office equipment and other resources.

Chaffey Dam Upgrade to Go Ahead

The announcement that the Federal Government has agreed to partly fund the Chaffey Dam upgrade to the tune of \$6.5454M is the last piece in the funding jigsaw. Already committed for some time were contributions from the NSW Government for \$19.197M (both safety works and upgrade), Tamworth Regional Council for \$2.482M and \$0.876M from the Peel Valley Irrigators.

The Commonwealth's contribution being 22.49% of the total funding completes the process.

The announcement finally brings an essential piece of regional infrastructure to fruition.

I am pleased to see that the politicking over the Dam has finished and I congratulate all parties for working together for the greater good. This is what government should be about.

Peter Andren the "Conscience of Parliament" Announces Retirement Due to Ill Health



The Independent Member for Calare, Peter Andren, seen here seated at bottom of photo, has recently announced his retirement from the Federal Parliament.

Unfortunately Peter has cancer and will be seeking treatment immediately. His honesty, integrity and independent regional representation will be sorely missed.

In my opinion, Peter is a great parliamentarian in the old fashioned principled way, rather than a politician. I feel sad at his leaving and I wish him well in his forthcoming treatment. It was a pleasure working with him.



Kootingal Public School Librarian, Anne Doak, with Tony Windsor at the opening of extensions to the library, which received funding assistance through the Investing in Our Schools Programme.

NE Schools Receive Funding from Federal Government's Investing in Our Schools Programme

45 schools within the New England Electorate received a total of \$2,803,463 to enable the completion of 111 projects. Examples of the projects include the provision of IT equipment, shade structures, library resources, change rooms, landscaping and outdoor learning areas.

Congratulations to the dedicated staff and P&Cs who developed the applications for funding and to the staff of the Department for Education, Science and Training.

Three New England Scholars Receive NSW Farmers' Scholarships

Congratulations to Belinda Gowen (Armidale), Gillian Burke (Tamworth) and Sophie Gulliver (Quirindi) for being awarded scholarships worth \$5,000 each to assist them in finishing their degrees and then use their talents and skills in regional NSW.

New England Electorate Receives \$585,540 Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) Funding

Aged Care Assessment Teams identify an aged person's needs before recommending a suitable government subsidised care package. I would like to thank the Minister for Ageing, the Hon Christopher Pyne, for approving the following funding:

Northern Tablelands ACAT	\$212,763
Tamworth ACAT	\$262,362
Dementia Support	\$110,415

The Dementia Support for Assessment project for the Northern Tablelands will now be able to engage a registered nurse to provide comprehensive psycho – geriatric assessments, diagnosis and co-case management of complex clients and carers.

NSW Rural and Regional Taskforce to Meet in Armidale in November

This Taskforce has come about as part of an agreement between the State Member for Northern Tablelands, the Hon Richard Torbay, and the NSW Premier. It has the potential to elevate country issues to the highest level in the State and set strategies to address many issues faced by Rural and Regional NSW. I congratulate Richard on this excellent initiative and look forward to having an opportunity to participate in the process.

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

www.tonywindsor.com.au

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

Consistency Horse of the Year Award

Mrs Debbie Finlay & Mr Michael Finlay (owners of Frost Bitten), Adrian Whitton (part owner Bold Blaze) and Tony Windsor at the presentation of the Tamworth Harness Racing Association's prestigious Consistency Horse of the Year Award. Frost Bitten and Bold Blaze dead heated for first place.



Woodenbong Student One of Only 32 Students Chosen to Participate in National Forum

Georgina Geyer, seen below at Parliament House receiving her Certificate from the Minister for Education, the Hon Julie Bishop, was selected to participate in the "Celebrating Democracy" week flagship event "Every Voice Counts!" Student Forum. Well done Georgina!



Freedom of Information Process Has Problems

I recently had occasion to seek information about the Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Entitlement from both the Australian Taxation Office and the Department of Transport and Regional Services in connection with the process concerning the taxation of compensation for loss of water entitlements.

I received the following responses from these two Government organisations; one was unable to find the relevant documents and the other exempted 459 relevant pages of a 461 page document. In other words, just two pages were available under the Freedom of Information process.

Freedom of Information is an important part of our democratic process and as such should be overhauled to make sure it is just what it says it is - "Freedom of Information".

Perhaps the current process should be called "Freedom from Information"!



Pollies for Small Business Week saw Tony spending some time behind the Inverell Telstra Shop counter with Cassie Hall and Joshua Cunningham.

New England Will Access OPEL Broadband

The New England Electorate will have 3 exchanges upgraded to very fast ADSL2+ broadband and 37 new wireless broadband sites (WiMax) built within the region. The locations are as follows:

ADSL2+

Armidale, Tamworth (2)

WiMax

Armidale (2)	Inverell
Ashford	Murrurundi
Bendemeer	Niangala
Ben Lomond	Oban
Blackville	Pine Ridge
Drake (2)	Somerton (2)
Dundee	The Summit (2)
Ebor	Tamworth (2)
Emmaville	Tenterfield (3)
Glen Innes	Uralla (2)
Guyra	Wallabadah (2)
Halls Creek	Watsons Creek
Hanging Rock	Wellingrove

Tamworth Mental Health Services Receive \$2M

Senator the Hon Brett Mason, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Ageing, recently announced that funding has been approved to help boost services and ease the difficulties in rural and remote areas for those people who need access.

Guyra United Hospital Auxiliary AGM

Richard Torbay and Guyra Mayor, Cllr Robyn Jackson, joined Tony at the Guyra United Hospital Auxiliary AGM. The 2007-08 Committee is President, Mrs Nancy Davidson, Vice Presidents, Mrs Helen Bearup & Mrs Nola Hill, Secretary, Mrs Gail Montague, Treasurer, Mrs Diane Walls & Publicity Officer, Mrs Lyn Skinner.



Around the Electorate

UNE Calls for Medical School Students

The announcement that UNE was calling for interested students to register for the first intake of the new Medical School is in fact an Australian first with the UNE being the first inland regional university to establish a Medical School.

Both UNE and the Newcastle University are to be congratulated for this major breakthrough. Hopefully those students who are trained in a regional university will come to appreciate the regional lifestyle and opportunities and elect to further their careers in a regional centre.

New England Should Not Be Ruled Out as Route For Melbourne to Brisbane Rail Link

The Federal Government has made two announcements that would appear to support New England's case for the Inland Rail Route. These are:

1. The rail line should go where it can do the most good for the Nation.
2. The Government would be relying on the private sector for support.

The New England Local Government Group has identified that the New England route would result in a saving of \$400M. The Melbourne to Brisbane traffic will only carry freight equivalent to two 3,000 tonne trains per day (doubling within 22 years). This is a low volume when compared to the Newcastle/North West corridor that already carries 110 million tonnes per year.

Funding for a Study into the Impact of Mining on Liverpool Plains Aquifers May Yet be Approved

The Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull, recently stated in Parliament that he would be "happy to look at any application on the matter"

There is very little science available regarding the interconnectivity of groundwater and surface water and as such it would be too late to correct the situation if mining does have a negative impact on the various water connections.

I welcome Minister Turnbull's encouraging remark and I hope it leads to a positive outcome.

The Broadband Challenge Forum

met recently in Parliament House. Pictured at the Forum are - Tony Windsor (Chair) with Mr Robin Eckerman, Dr Joshua Gans and Mr Richard Ryan, Director Client Relations, Parliamentary Library.



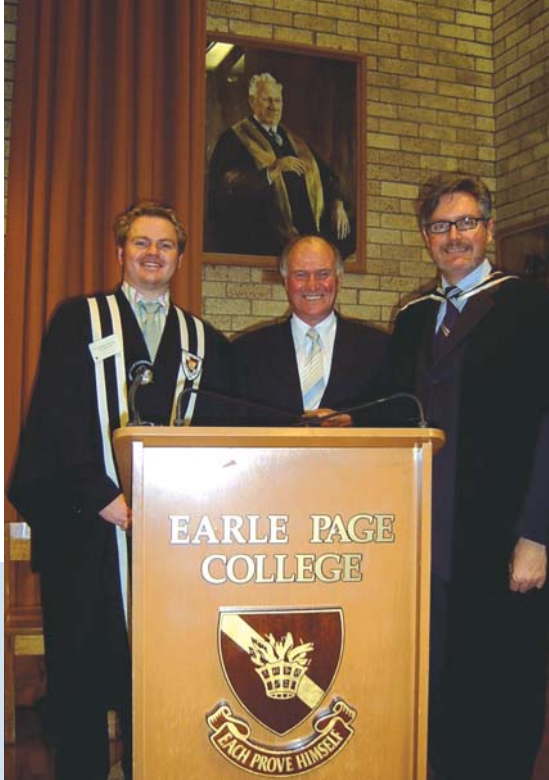
Federal Parliament Sitting Dates September to December

Subject to the calling of an election the following are the sitting dates of the House of Representatives.

September 10 to 13 and 17 to 20
 October 15 to 18 and 22 to 25
 November 12 to 15 and 26 to 29
 December 3 to 6

Australian Defence Medal presentation ceremonies

have recently been held in Glen Innes and Tamworth. The recipients in Tamworth were Harold Medway, Noel Knight, Elaine Quinn, Barry Spencer, Beverley Deane, Peter Honeyman, Frederick Robinson, Owen Evans, Ian Twemlow, Raymond Bennett, Joan Rankine (Pres. War Widows Guild), Bob Chapman (Pres. Tamworth RSL Sub Branch) and Lesley Smith. Congratulations ladies and gentlemen.



The Earle Page College Politics Lecture

Tony Windsor, flanked by Mr Jonathon Shumack, President, Earle Page College Junior Common Room and Mr David Ward, Master of Earle Page College (see further information on front page).

Equine Influenza Outbreak

At the time of writing, 38 horses were quarantined at the Moonbi Sportsground as a part of a major Australia wide horse flu outbreak.

The local NSW DPI, led by Arnold Turner, did a great job in bringing the area under quarantine – something that no one has done before. Emergency services and Telstra have also been involved in helping as well as local businesses and personnel.

In future, events like this should be declared natural disasters, as after all, the quarantines of this nature are for the good of all Australians.

Congratulations

Congratulations to the following people who have celebrated their special Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries during the period July & August 2007.

50th Wedding Anniversaries

Reginald & Bette Payne, Manilla
 Archie & Patricia Laws, Manilla
 Brian & Daphne Shorten, Tamworth
 Des & Barbara Douglass, Inverell
 Des & Nancy Tyson, Manilla

60th Wedding Anniversaries

Leslie & Melva Stevens, Glen Innes
 Derek & Merle Bashford, Armidale
 Gordon & Hazel Rooney, Inverell
 Mervyn & Esma Whitten, Glen Innes
 Joh & Trudi Van Giessen, Armidale
 John & Ellen Garnett, Tamworth
 Ted & Joan Andrews, Uralla
 Frank & Belle Chilcott, Tamworth (61st)

70th Wedding Anniversary

Ken & Norma Hughes, Werris Creek

90th Birthdays

Eileen Hardy, Inverell
 Bill Tanner, Inverell
 Philip Horton, Tamworth
 Christina Pearson, Guyra
 Ruth Windsor, Werris Creek

100th Birthdays

Reginald Christie, Armidale
 Agnes Challen, Glen Innes

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.

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Please contact my office should you wish to make an appointment. Don't hesitate to inform my staff of your enquiry, as they may be able to help you on the spot.