

Tony Windsor MP

The New England Independent

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

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Federal Government Ignores 80% of Wheat Growers by Refusing to Support the Single Desk Wheat Marketing System

The Government's determination to ignore the wishes of 80% of Australian wheat growers regarding the marketing of their wheat who indicated that they wished to retain the Single Desk marketing system has been a major disappointment.

Interestingly, collective bargaining was a central plank for the Government's changes to the Work Choices legislation and the Single Desk system comes from the same philosophical position. The following is a summary of my recent wheat grower poll. The poll endeavoured to contact all wheat growers within Australia. It was the only poll to do so.



Tony Windsor delivers the results of his wheat grower poll on the Single Desk to the Canberra Press Gallery.

Wheat Grower Poll Highlights

| Support for | % | NSW vs WA analysis | % |
|---------------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| Single Desk | 80 | NSW support for Single Desk structure | 87 |
| Multi Licensed System (Govt proposal) | 14 | WA support for Single Desk structure | 71 |
| Total deregulation | 6 | NSW support for Govt proposal | 8 |
| Statistical confidence level | 95 | WA support for Govt proposal | 22 |

The 2008 Federal Budget

Tax cuts and spending cuts in the 2008 Federal Budget are sending two messages to Australians.

One message says Australians have \$47B, over four years, more money to spend by way of tax cuts and the other is that the Government is cutting its spending by \$7B to curb inflation in 2008/09. That is encouraging inflation on one hand and discouraging spending on the other. The following are some comments in relation to the Budget.

Pensions - It appears that any increase in the pension is going to be held up in the review of Australia's tax system that is not due to report back until the end of 2009. Meanwhile, pensioners continue to suffer with their pensions not keeping up with the increased cost of living.

Aged Care - Aged care service providers have received a reprieve with the continuation of the 1.75% increase in the "Conditional Adjustment Payment" that the Aged Care industry needed to keep pace with their increased costs.

Dental Health - Dental health has had its funding program boosted, however the chronic dental care program is no longer in existence and therefore those with health problems like diabetes will not be eligible for dental assistance under Medicare. *Continued on page 2*

To the Electorate

The 2008 Federal Budget, the first of the new Labor Government, has sent mixed messages to Australians.

I am concerned that the individual tax cuts and Government spending cuts to balance them out will not have the desired effect on inflation and therefore not keep interest rates and other costs of living down.

The Government does however, I believe, have the ability to impact more on fuel prices which pervade all items that we consume.

A review of our taxation system was announced during the Treasurer's Budget Speech, however, for the review to be truly comprehensive, it should be unrestricted. That is, all forms of taxation revenue should be looked at, including the GST.

The review needs to look at how much the Government needs to raise to provide quality services to Australians and to invest in future needs of Australians.

It's not rocket science, but it needs to look at all options and not be hamstrung by a Government directive not to look at one form of taxation or another because of the political fallout before it is even started.

The review must also have as underlying goals simplicity and fairness.

By this I mean that the methods of taxation need to be fair to all and easy to understand and comply with.

Our current system is bogged down with so many amendments and rulings that technicalities are open to different interpretations that can lead to costly legal battles.

I invite you to let me know your thoughts as to how we can improve the system.

Tony Windsor

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

Inverell Electorate Office Opens



Inverell Mayor, Clr Barry Johnston, congratulates Tony Windsor after officially opening the Electorate Office at Inverell to help serve the people of the northern part of the Electorate.

Gwymac Landcare Group's Climate Change Forum

The Forum and Expo's aim was to make farmers and the broader community aware of climate change, examine what can be done to address the problems and consider the opportunities that may arise.



Tony Windsor, Neville Bryant of the Gwymac Landcare Group and presenter Alan Launder seen at the Climate Change Forum held at Inverell on 28 March.

Independent Miniature Horse Registry Receives a Fundraising Donation



Russell and Patricia Blinkhorn recently donated their miniature horse "Crystal Park Against the Wind" to the fundraising effort for the Independent Miniature Horse Registry.

2008 Budget Comments (continued from page 1)

Private Health Care Medicare Levy - There has been an increase in the income threshold from \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year for singles and from \$100,000 to \$150,000 per year for couples.

Baby Bonus - The Baby Bonus has had new rules attached to it making all payments by fortnightly instalments over 6 months. It will also be means tested with families earning over \$150,000 not being eligible to receive the payment.

Infrastructure, Health and Education Investment Funds -

The establishment of Investment Funds for building national infrastructure projects, health and hospitals and education facilities is to be commended.

Infrastructure – Roads to Recovery and Regional Development -

The popular Roads to Recovery Program has been maintained. The AusLink Strategic Regional Projects Program promoting regional development has also been maintained.

The Regional Partnerships Program has been scrapped and replaced by the \$176M Better Regions Program and the \$74M Regional Development Australia Program. A new program, the Regional and Local Country Infrastructure Program, will be established next year.

Telecommunications Rollout in the Regions - The Australian Broadband Guarantee program has gained another \$270M over the next 4 years whilst the Government is developing its \$4.7B National Broadband Network that should provide regional Australia with a much-improved service.

Climate Change, Water and Environment - Climate change and environmental issues have received a boost with \$2.3B over 5 years including \$500M for renewable energy and \$150M for energy innovation. The \$2.2B Caring For Our Country Program is designed to bring an integrated approach to natural resource management. The Government has also confirmed its commitment of \$12.9B over 10 years for the National "Water for the Future" program.

Drought Support - Exceptional Circumstance drought assistance has been continued with a further commitment of \$761M set aside for this year.

Your views on the Budget - I am keen to hear your views on the Budget.

Please send comments to me by email at Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

Fax to 6761 3380 or mail to PO Box 963, Tamworth NSW 2340

Federal Health Minister Yet to Meet Low Dose Radiation and Radio Wave Cancer Therapy Advocate

Boggabri cancer treatment campaigner, Jenny Barlow, is still trying to meet with the Minister for Health and Aging, the Hon Nicola Roxon. Meanwhile she proposes to build a clinic in Sydney to make available a procedure that is used in many other places in the world.

Mrs Barlow is not asking for funds to build the clinic or to conduct the research. She just wants the appropriate health professionals to be funded to monitor the outcomes of the treatment – surely a sensible procedure and request. The past Government failed to pick up this request and so far the current Federal Government has also baulked at her request.

CDMA Shut Down

The CDMA mobile phone network has been turned off despite the fact that many in the Electorate indicated that they were not receiving comparable service from the NextG network. The original Telstra undertaking was that the new NextG service would be equivalent or better than CDMA. According to the feedback I have received this is not always the case.

A fully privatised Telstra's priority is to its shareholders by way of profits and dividends. They may decide not to deliver services where they will not make a profit. The previous Government organised the sale of the controlling interest in Telstra so now decisions are out of the Government's hands. It is, however, an obligation of all governments to govern for all Australians and that includes those who live in remote communities.

Tenterfield Bypass

I recently addressed Parliament regarding the Tenterfield Bypass study. This project is in urgent need of funds.

The study is very important to Tenterfield and to the travelling public in light of major safety concerns in the main street of Tenterfield.

The former Government ignored the problem and it is to be hoped that the new Government will not do the same.

Too often the improvements only occur after a tragic accident. Let's hope that this will not be the case.

Liverpool Plains Groundwater Study Update

The funding for the \$4.88M independent study into coal, groundwater and surface resources of the Gunnedah Basin seems to have disappeared.

Despite the promises from the previous Government it appears the proposal was simply not signed off.

It is ironic that the former Minister for Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull, is now complaining about the fact that the North Bondi Surf Club has not received its funding as exactly the same thing happened in that case - ie it wasn't signed off in the appropriate manner.

I have taken the matter up with the new Minister, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, and will keep the Electorate informed of progress.

The study is essential if we are to know the impact on the environment especially as the Liverpool Plains is one of the most productive and reliable farming areas in Australia. Coal is only there until it is mined out, whilst the agricultural production coming from the Liverpool Plains will be there for centuries provided we look after the environment.

The Mt Lindesay Road Between Woodenbong and Legume Still Needs Major Upgrades

The Downs to Rivers Action Committee is continuing its push for the full upgrade of this road.

They have been lobbying for this upgrade for many years and have had some success in the last few years in obtaining funding for the particularly bad spots on the road. The road forms a major link between the southern Darling Downs and the Northern Rivers.

Emmaville Supports Glen Innes' Outstanding Celtic Festival

Pictured to the right are Emmaville school children entertaining visiting Celts with Celtic Dances. The Emmaville Mining Museum also displayed items highlighting the district's Celtic heritage.



Optus 3G Mobile Expansion in the New England Extends the Service to Smaller Communities

The recent announcement that Optus will provide 19 new base stations to the smaller communities in the New England Electorate within 18 months is welcome.

| | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| These are: Ashford | Ebor | Kootingal | Upper Manilla |
| Barraba | Elcombe | Manilla | Urbanville |
| Bingara | Emmaville | Niangala | Walcha |
| Bundarra | Gilgai | Tingha | Woolomin |
| Drake | Graman | Upper Horton | |

Optus also plans to upgrade 5 base stations being UNE, Delungra, Elsmore, Invergowrie and Kootingal.

Inverell Pensioner Disappointed with Lack of Support for Pensioners but will Continue the Fight



Betty Moore from Inverell has started a national campaign to address the plight of pensioners.

She attended the Budget session in Canberra with Channel Seven's Today Tonight team and was also helped in Canberra by Steve Price, The Sunday Telegraph as well as locally via the Inverell Times and 2NZ.

Whilst disappointed with the lack of support for pensioners in the Budget, she is continuing her battle.

Betty is now part of the 'adopt a pensioner' program to encourage non-pensioners to help pensioners in need.

It is indeed a sad indictment on our current system that this sort of program should even be contemplated let alone commenced.

The Australia 2020 Summit

The recent 2020 Summit showed that politicians are not the font of all wisdom - so much so that it may be a good idea if the concept becomes a biennial event.

Most topics are complex so regular summits could mean that the Government of the day has a better understanding of the issues and whom they are impacting upon.

I participated in the Population, Sustainability, Climate Change and Water group. I did not agree with all of the final communiqué, however I was pleased to have the opportunity to raise some of the issues that I saw as important for Australia and for the New England Electorate.

A Government response to the Summit is expected in December this year.



Tony Windsor with New England representatives Peter Bailey and Susan Simms during a break in the Summit. Both Peter and Susan attended the group that addressed issues concerning Regional Development.

Around the Electorate

The following are just some of the events that I have attended over the past few months.

The New England Regional Committee of the Aged and Community Services Association of NSW met in Manilla recently. The Association is the largest Industry association representing the aged and community care not-for-profit providers in NSW and the ACT.

The Inverell Branch of the NSW Farmers' Association Annual General Meeting. I spoke about the Wheat Export Marketing Bill's proposed changes, the review of drought assistance, communication services, climate change and future opportunities in agriculture.

The NSW Governor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO was the special guest at the Tamworth RSL Sub Branch 90th Anniversary Ball.

Uralla Bowling Club's Water Wise Works now in operation. The improvements mean the Bowling Club has a recycling system and is now self sufficient in water.

The Tenterfield Oracles of the Bush grows bigger and better every year and now attracts visitors from the huge South East Queensland tourist market. Congratulations to Fay McCowan for being named the 2008 'Tenterfield Legend'.

Anzac Day was spent with the Guyra RSL Sub Branch. It is pleasing to see that Anzac Day is still gaining in popularity as the Nation remembers those who died in the service of defending their Country.

Flag raising ceremony at Black Mountain Public School. I was pleased to recently present a new Australian Flag to the School.



Flag presentation at Timbumburi Public School

Tony Windsor presenting a new Australian Flag to Timbumburi Public School and speaking with the students about the history and design of our National Flag.

Government Involvement in Dentistry Needs a Major Revamp

Since the beginning of the year the Government has made major changes to the dental health programs.

Those people previously able to access dental work to the value of \$2,125 per year for 2 years under Medicare (if the dental condition affected other chronic illnesses) will not be able to do so after 30 June.

It is replaced by a teen dental program that provides \$150 per person to visit a dentist to explore the state of their dental health.

One wonders what happens to them after that if they don't have the funds to treat any condition that was uncovered.

'Cut Off' Date for Dental Medicare Help Creates Problems

Armidale dentist, Dr Chris Cole, talks with Mr Bambos Charalambous and Tony Windsor about the removal of the Chronic Dental Health Program that Mr Charalambous missed by one day.



Congratulations

Congratulations to the following people who have or will be celebrating their special Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries during the period March 1st to June 1st 2008.

100th Birthdays

Olive Quilty of Red Range
Abrahanna Bijl of Armidale
Avis Sheedy of Armidale

90th Birthdays

Nellie Westerlaken of Glen Innes
Muriel Hynes of Tenterfield
Reginald Hitchen of Quirindi

70th Wedding Anniversaries

John & Enid Moen of Wollomombi
Ernie & Dulcie Ranclaud of Currabubula

60th Wedding Anniversaries

Vince & Sybil Wann of Werris Creek
John & Patricia Watts of Ebor
Malcolm (Mac) & Marion Roberts of Tamworth
Edgar & Leila Dunn of Walcha
Roy & Pat Taylor of Tenterfield
Doug & Helen McPherson of Tamworth
Cecil & Irene Cooper of Manilla
Vincent & Noreen Doyle of Uralla
Brendan & Marie Nihill of Tamworth
John & Mary Frend of Tamworth
Calvert & Edna Birtles of Saumarez Ponds
Jock & Syl McCrae of Quirindi
David & Bernice Carter of Barraba
Stanley & Mavis Tozer of Inverell
Noel & Oriel Peters of South Tamworth
Bruce & Ida Gardiner of West Tamworth

50th Wedding Anniversaries

Max & Shirley Newcombe of Moonbi
George & Patricia Dale of Uralla
Rowan & Pamela Dixon of Bingara
Reginald & Pauline Wadwell of Pine Ridge
Len & Beryl Adams of Tamworth
Don & Jan Claridge of Guyra
Colin & Fay Monckton of Tamworth
George & Val Rozynski of Glen Innes
Brian & Olive Hungerford of Inverell
Kevin & Nita Thompson of Tenterfield
Neville & Anne Herden of Tamworth
Barry & Ella Skinner of Armidale
Jack & Val Davis of Walcha
Don & Eileen Myhill of Armidale
Bill & Joan Bywater of Glen Innes
Milton & Wendy Gooda of Inverell
Ernest & Nancy McGregor of Armidale
Frederick & Barbara Rainger of Barraba

Contact Details

Toll free 1300 301 839

Tamworth Office

Shop 5/259 Peel St, Tamworth NSW 2340
Ph (02) 6761 3080 • Fax (02) 6761 3380

Inverell Office

88 Otho St, Inverell NSW 2360
Ph (02) 6721 0144 • Fax (02) 6721 0288

All Mail PO Box 963 Tamworth NSW 2340

Email Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

Website www.tonywindsor.com.au

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