

Tony Windsor MP

The New England Independent

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

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Liverpool Plains Farmers Rally to Discuss Water, Coal and Other Issues



Tony Windsor addressing the Liverpool Plains farmers rally – with Narrabri Shire Councillor Bevan O'Reagan, Caroon Coal Action Group Chairman Doug Ranken and NSW Greens MLC Lee Rhiannon.

\$1.5m For a Study Into Surface/Groundwater Resources in Namoi Region

The Federal Government has committed \$1.5m for an independent study to determine the most sustainable allocation of water for agriculture, mining operations and the environment. It is subject to matching funding from the NSW Government.

The objectives of the study are:

- To provide scientific information regarding water resources in the Namoi Catchment.
- To provide advanced knowledge and understanding of the quantity and quality of surface water and groundwater resources.
- To provide scientific information to benefit community awareness and decision processes in all spheres of government and in the agricultural and mining sectors.

The study will be managed by a steering committee and will draw on scientific and other expertise.

\$3.4m "Achieving Sustainable Groundwater Entitlements" Community Development Grants for Namoi Valley Catchment Organisations

The Minister for the Environment and Water, Senator the Hon Penny Wong, has honoured the previous Government's agreement with the NSW State Government. I have been lobbying for this to happen for some considerable time. The recipients are as follows:

- \$2.1m for the Liverpool Plains Shire Council to find alternative water supplies for Quirindi to reduce its reliance on overdrawn groundwater systems.
- \$1.3m for the Namoi Catchment Management Authority for two projects:
 - A water use efficiency programme for groundwater irrigators; and
 - A hydrological investigation of Gins Leap Gap.

I am pleased to see that the Minister has clarified this issue following the agreement to support an investigation into the groundwater issues relating to long line mining in the Caroon plains area.

To the Electorate

2008 was a very busy time in the New England Electorate and the Federal Parliament with a wide range of issues, projects, concerns and matters arising throughout the year.

The past 12 months, the first year under the new Government, has indeed had its challenges as every year does, regardless of who holds the key to the Treasury, and it has been an interesting time in working with and lobbying the new Ministry as an Independent Member of Parliament.

Some of the major issues affecting the New England Electorate during the year included the impact of mining activities on groundwater systems in the Liverpool Plains region, major changes to international wheat marketing arrangements, the effects of the equine influenza outbreak, the changeover from the CDMA to Next G mobile network, the ongoing drought conditions across much of the region with the continuing need for Exceptional Circumstances Assistance and, in typical Australian form, major floods within the Tamworth region.

I was pleased to be invited to participate in the Government's 2020 Summit held at Parliament House and represent the views of the people of New England.

The issue of climate change has also continued with the release of the Government's emissions trading scheme White Paper.

The National Broadband Network will soon be announced and I look forward to services in the country being enhanced so that disadvantages of distance, smallness and remoteness are significantly reduced.

In addition, major Infrastructure projects were announced late last year and more will be announced in the near future.

On behalf of Lyn, our family and my staff I wish you all the best for 2009.

Tony Windsor

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

“Regional Powered Tower” Concept a Telecommunications System for Small Communities

Some “outside the square” thinking has to occur if small regional communities are to be joined into the telecommunication network. During a visit to Wellingrove, I met with over 70 residents and members of the Wellingrove Progress Association to discuss their need for a mobile tower.

This is a classic example where the Powered Tower Program would help a small community. The concept has the government providing the basic infrastructure for the tower (site, access road and power) and then all telecommunications service providers could use the facility.

Hope Still for Glen Innes Research Station

Following my question to the Federal Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry that the Minister “investigate if there is any partnership arrangement at a federal level that may keep this vital resource operating”, the Minister has given an undertaking to investigate such opportunities.

The research station has been involved in recording soil carbon levels since 1934 as a part of a wider research to develop stable and productive crop rotations.

Considering the recent flurry of research into soil carbon one would have thought that rather than close the facility down, as has been suggested by the NSW Government, that its research capabilities in this field should be expanded. The Minister’s involvement could back up the excellent lobbying by Richard Torbay and the local community.

Armidale’s Electric Vehicle Showcased at Parliament

Representatives of Energetique, the developers of the energy mobility vehicle “evMe” were able to generate interest in their unique vehicle as a number of MPs and members of the media inspected the vehicle at Parliament House recently.



Dr Phil Coop, CEO, Energetique shows the “evMe” to Tony Windsor and the Shadow Minister for Energy and Resources, The Hon Ian MacFarlane

Australian Defence Medal Recipients at the Armidale Presentation

Front row – Christopher Barnden, Simon Campbell, Ashley Clew, Mrs. J Snell (on behalf of late husband Gordon Snell) and Angus Taylor.

Back row – Harold Heffernan, President Armidale National Servicemen’s Assoc, Richard Torbay MP, Tony Windsor MP, Capt Mark Ingram, Clr Brian Kelly and Bob Holloway, President Armidale RSL Sub Branch.



School Visits to Canberra Serve as an Introduction to our Parliamentary System



Members of the Danthonia Community - Inverell meet the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Tony Burke with Tony Windsor.

Tribute to Alun Davies

Alun Davies’ work and 49 years of technical experience in the telecommunication sector has been absolutely invaluable in the development of communication services across New England.

His assistance over the 8 years he was at the Armidale TCW office has been a major factor in helping to resolve numerous Telstra issues that I have raised on behalf of the residents of New England. I wish him well in his “retirement”.

The Re-introduction of University Services

The previous government removed \$170m per annum from university student services. They were intent on removing the “politicisation” of the Student Union movement. Instead of addressing the issue, it removed the need for students to contribute anything towards ongoing campus services.

In effect, the university had to pay for what was previously partly paid by student funds. This severely curtailed the ability of universities to meet the needs of students and as a result jobs were lost.

I will be looking closely at the new Legislation to make sure that the mistakes of the past are not revisited, such as ensuring student service fees do not go to political activities.

To put pressure on the Universities finances (even if it was unintentional) was a retrograde step. Let’s hope that the reintroduction of the fee will avoid what has been a financial disaster.

Pensioners Rallies in Inverell and Tamworth Very Worthwhile

A number of excellent suggestions arose from the recent rallies. Some are:

- An electronic pensioners’ swipe card that can automatically deduct the GST.
- Removal of the NSW Countrylink booking fee.
- Inclusion of Dental Care in Medicare.
- Improving the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) to reflect the true cost of travel.
- The need to cut out the State Government’s middleman role that often occurs with federal funding.
- Investigate and eradicate the impost of taxes and other government charges

Clearly there was every indication that the exponential increases in taxes and other government charges over the years have eroded the capacity for pensioners and carers to survive.

Mineral Council Now Wants a More Strategic Regional Approach to Mining Applications

I was pleased to note that the Minerals Council of Australia has told a Senate Committee that the Government should look at regions as a whole before mining applications are made to determine what needs to be protected from mining development.

This is in stark contrast to previous Minerals Council statements when a representative stated, "there is no need for an extra piece of environmental oversight".

As there are two diametrically opposed views being expressed, perhaps the Chairman should solve the confusion by hopefully confirming the view expressed to the Senate Committee.

Recent New England Electorate Funding

Programme	Departments	Recipient	\$ Amount
Building Excellence in Support & Training BEST Program	Veterans' Affairs	Tamworth RSL Sub Branch	39,860
		Armidale RSL Sub Branch	21,093
Saluting their Services	Veterans' Affairs	Elsmore Soldiers War Memorial Trust	900
		Tenterfield RSL Sub Branch	6,000
		Jennings Public School	2,442
Black Spot Road Funding	Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government	Bundarra Road	161,379
		Guyra Road	185,000
Trade Training Centres in Schools Program	Education	The Armidale School & PLC Armidale	2,996,147
Commonwealth Community Legal Services Program	Attorney-General	North and Northwest Community Legal Centre	120,581
Family Relationship Services Program	Attorney-General	Centacare New England North West	139,126
National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund	Attorney-General	NSW Volunteer Rescue Association - Quirindi	1,287
		NSW Volunteer Rescue Association - Inverell	1,650
		NSW State Emergency Services - Inverell	55,000
Bushfire Mitigation Program	Attorney-General	Various New England locations	99,553
Local Government Financial Assistance Act	Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development & Local Government	08/09 Cash Entitlements – combined total for all New England Electorate Councils	35,447,959
Family Relationship Services Program for Drought Counselling Services	Families, Housing, Community Services & Indigenous Affairs	Anglican Counselling Services (Diocese of Armidale)	300,000
Funding to promote and market Disability Business Services	Disabilities & Children Services	Challenge Disability Services	10,000
		Glen Innes Regional Sheltered Workshop	2,500
		North Haven Limited	2,500
		Integrated Living Australia Ltd	2,500
Mental Non-Government Organisation Capacity Building Grants Program	Health and Ageing	Moffatt Falls Pty Ltd	40,000
		Inverell Disability Services Inc	40,000



Visit to Canberra Welcome

Members of the St Nicholas Church Senior Citizens Group seen here with Tony Windsor during their visit to Canberra.

Ethanol Mandate a Boost for Grain Growers

The recent NSW Government's decision to proceed with mandating 10% ethanol in regular unleaded petrol from 2011 will be a boost for grain growers and a win/win situation in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Rather than costing agriculture it will improve the local grain market, reduce the importation of fuel and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact rain affected grain drops in protein but not in starch (the main component needed for ethanol production).

The fact that GM-Holden has announced the production of an E85 Commodore could mean the oil companies will have to offer E85 alongside E10 Diesel and LPG.



Westpac Rescue Helicopter Auction item winners

David & Gail Head, Bob Edgecock and Robyn Johnson with Tony Windsor during their visit to Canberra.

Beale Report into Australia's Biosecurity Welcome

Australia must jealously guard its reputation for having strict quarantine and biosecurity measures. We cannot afford to trade off any biosecurity protection for our industries in the name of free trade or the possibility of any other international agreements.

The recent equine influenza outbreak in Australia highlights the problems we face if we let our standards drop. If we don't keep the standards up we run the risk of widespread economic hardship. The Rudd Government should be congratulated for undertaking the review in its first 12 months of government.



Tony Windsor with Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School First XIII after presenting the Australian Sports Achievement Certificates for winning the Statewide University Shield.

Regional Funding Program Recommendations Released

The Parliamentary Infrastructure Committee was asked to report on the highly critical Australian National Audit Office's Performance Audit of the Regional Partnerships Program.

The Committee made 24 recommendations in the interim report with further work to follow. Some of the recommendations and endorsements were as follows:

- That the relevant Minister be obliged to record the basis on which the approver is satisfied that expenditure represents efficient use of public money and is in accordance with the relevant policies of the Commonwealth.
- Separation of Not-for-Profit and For-Profit organisations when considering funding. Not-for-Profit funding to come under a new Local Community Infrastructure Program and For-Profit funding to come through a separate entity such as AusIndustry.
- There is to be a greater emphasis on prioritising community needs through Local Government rather than through the ad hoc system of politically targeted funding.

\$12m to Train and Provide Breast Cancer Nurses in Regional Australia

The Government's announcement to fund the McGrath Foundation to help train and provide breast cancer nurses in Regional Australia is a welcome move especially as Armidale will be one of the 14 locations within NSW to receive funding.

The scheme will give access to specially trained nurses who will provide care, support and information to patients and their families. The easier a service is to access the better the outcome will be for all involved.

Ministers Tony Burke and Kim Carr Asked to Ensure CSIRO Chiswick Research Centre Remains Open

CSIRO Chiswick is an important facility, particularly in terms of its value to the region through employment of highly qualified people as it produces world-class research and developments that have direct applications to rural industries. Any change to its activities would be detrimental to Australia's competitive advantage.

Pensioners' Needs Should be Included in Report into Australia's Tax System

The Christmas lump sum payment to all the pensioners - be they aged, disability or veterans was indeed welcome, as this segment of the population surely needed some extra funds. They have been doing it tough for years as the cost of living has increased faster than their pensions.

I am looking forward to the Government's report into the taxation system recommending a rise in the pension by at least the equivalent weekly amount of \$35 for single pensioners and at least \$26 per person per week for couples.

Good News for Murrurundi Rail Tunnel at Last

The recent announcement of \$580m funding for the Hunter/North West rail corridor (a part of a package of \$1.2b dollars recently announced by the Prime Minister) will be a major boost for the region.

\$290m of the amount will be used to realign the rail line across the Liverpool Range. All the people that have been lobbying and promoting for many years for this major infrastructure project should be rightly proud of their involvement. We have only to wait until 2011 to see the benefits flow to the region.



Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP chatting with Integrated Living Employee Greg Blanch during her visit to the electorate about his competing at the Special Olympics in Portugal.

Congratulations

60th Wedding Anniversaries

- Allen & Edith Shanley, Werris Creek
- Donald & Thelma Ferris, Armidale
- Doug & Dorothy Barnes, Gunnedah
- Ron & Val Bakon, Inverell
- Colin & Norma Hart, Bingara
- Gilbert & Mabel White, Armidale
- John Haines & Thelma Perry, Tenterfield
- Ronald & Beryl Gruber, Tenterfield
- Ron & Nell Sisson, Guyra
- Reg & Joan Cooper, Uralla
- Bob & Val Jones, Tamworth
- Donald & Margaret Beesley, Guyra
- Peter & June Mansfield, Inverell
- Martin & Betty Miller, Tenterfield
- Cliff & Doreen Galloway, Tamworth
- John & Judith Simson, Quirindi
- Gordon & Clare Worlton, Tamworth
- Bob & Thyra Sullings, Quirindi
- James & Winifred Watson, Armidale
- Wilfred & Rae Kiehne, Deepwater
- Don & Elaine Wilder, Inverell
- Morrie Morris & Mary Royal, Armidale
- John & Jean Cooper, Glen Innes
- Thomas & Beryl Nugent, Tamworth
- Raymond & Judy Pullman, Tamworth

65th, 66th & 70th Wedding Anniversaries

- Dan & Phyllis Donaldson, Tamworth (65th)
- William & Olive Harris, Inverell (65th)
- Mr Hessel & Joan Barber, Quirindi (66th)
- James & Barbara Vance, Tamworth (70th)

100th Birthdays

- Ada Callan, Inverell
- Elva Blamey, Tamworth
- Agnes Challen, Glen Innes
- Edna Kavanagh, Uralla
- Molly Thorley, Tamworth
- Alfred Powell, Tamworth

104th Birthday

- Ah Wai Jow, Tamworth

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 if you would like an appointment to see me at one of my offices or on my next town visit. Alternatively my staff may be able to help you.