

# Tony Windsor MP

## The New England Independent

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

July 2009



Landholders Outside Mining Wardens Court in Gunnedah after Recent Hearing.

### Mining and the Liverpool Plains

The fight continues to disallow mining activities in the Liverpool Plains until scientific knowledge of the groundwater and surface water flows is fully understood.

The Caroon Coal Action Group deserves much praise for their persistent and logical stance.

All political parties have danced around the potential long-term damage to these highly productive floodplains and water systems should mining be allowed without fully knowing the on-site and off-site impacts.

I am not anti-coal mining, however I am of the opinion that we shouldn't allow mining in sensitive or highly productive areas, particularly when we don't fully understand the underlying geological structures and ramifications that could occur both on the immediate area and the broader downstream environment. With the appointment of the Murray Darling Basin Authority and their Brief to establish a Plan for the Murray Darling System, the issues of mining and the upgrade of Chaffey Dam are paramount.

This issue has more to play out in the various forums and it is difficult to give up-to-the-minute details. However, the whole debate has broader ramifications for both the agricultural and mining industries and the regions that support and are supported by these industries. We cannot afford to make a mistake, as if we do, the consequences will be permanent.

### To the Electorate

Thank you for taking the time to read my newsletter.

It's been another interesting time in the Parliament with a number of far-reaching issues being introduced, debated, amended and passed into legislation or sent back for further deliberation.

The "Global Financial Crisis" still casts a shadow over the thinking of all in the Parliament as we grapple with how best to minimise its impact.

The Government has introduced short and medium term measures to try to stimulate the economy and whilst everyone has an opinion on whether these are the correct strategies, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and only time will tell.

Thus far, it appears the Australian economy is weathering the storm better than most other developed countries, however we certainly cannot become complacent.

The Government brought down its Budget in May, which reflects the stimulus and its desire to keep Australia moving forward. Some of the measures as they relate to the New England Electorate can be found in this Newsletter.

Unfortunately, in the last few weeks of Parliament, the process has been taken over by a darker side of politics. I believe that our time in Parliament should be focussed on the issues that will impact on the daily lives of Australians and goodness knows there are plenty of them.

I invite you to let me know your thoughts.

*Tony Windsor*

Tony Windsor MP  
Member for New England

## ABC Heywire Competition Winners Write Stories that Relate to Real Issues



The high standard of Heywire entrants continues to impress me. This year I was able to discuss their stories with Jemmima Buckman of Narrabri and Angie Lee Olm from South East Queensland, both winners of their section.

Tony Windsor congratulates ABC New England North West Heywire Winner Jemmima Buckman.

## \$3.5m to New England TAFEs

The various TAFE campuses that make up the New England Institute of TAFE will receive a total of \$3.5M via the Federal Government's Better TAFE Facilities Element of the Teaching and Learning Capital Fund for Vocational Education and Training.

The grant will enable the TAFE to:

- undertake small capital works
- refurbish facilities at its campuses as well as to help procure new equipment.

## Murrurundi Tunnel Finally gets \$290M to Upgrade

The recent announcement that the Federal Government has approved a complete upgrade of the Murrurundi Tunnel is a relief for all those who have spent years lobbying for this to happen. Once construction starts it will be a great result for the communities and businesses west of the mountains, especially the grains and minerals industries.

This major infrastructure improvement has also been greatly enhanced by the announcement that a further \$290M is to be spent upgrading the Hunter Valley section of this line, reducing this bottleneck.

A side benefit will be that the frequent long delays experienced by passenger trains will be substantially minimised.

## Glen Innes Severn and Tenterfield Targeted for Jobs Funds

The above Shires have been targeted for extra assistance through the Federal Government's Jobs Fund as they have become a part of a Priority Employment Area. A Regional Local Employment Area Coordinator will be appointed to help drive local responses to job losses and declining economic conditions. Jobs Fund projects (that can apply for up to \$2M) must address at least one of the following four target areas:

- Create Jobs or retain people in jobs
- Build skills for the future
- Build community infrastructure or improve community amenities which can generate local jobs
- Provide start-up seed funding for local enterprises or maintain/expand services that generate jobs and/or improve community services.

## \$355,000 for Black Spot Funding

Funding to fix three dangerous sections of road in the electorate has been made available via the Black Spot Funding Program and the Nation Building Package.

The sites to be improved under these programs are as follows:

- Bundarra Road 17kms west of Uralla \$150,000
- Gwydir Highway near Gragin Road & Boundary Creek west of Delungra \$55,000
- Waterfall Way near Wollomombi \$150,000

## Liverpool Plains Shire Council Wins National Local Government Award



Liverpool Plains Shire Council General Manager, Robert Hunt, and Mayor Cllr Ian Lobsey in Canberra with Tony Windsor receiving the Innovation in Natural Resource Management Award on behalf of Liverpool Plains Shire Council. The award was won for Tracer Weeds Mobile Mapping

### Inverell High School Students Experience Parliament

Two Inverell High School students spent a week doing work experience in Parliament in June. Tori McGregor and Clare Angel-Auld are seen here with Tony Windsor and Senator Bob Brown.



### Federal Government Supports Youth Insearch Program with \$350,000

Youth Insearch in Queensland, NSW and Victoria has a long history of successfully helping troubled young people turn their lives around. As a result of the global financial crisis, Youth Insearch has had its corporate support diminished and the \$350,000 now granted will be vital. I will be donating a part of my Federal Electorate Allowance to the organisation and have written to all MPs that have Youth Insearch in their electorates asking that they consider doing the same thing.

### Tenterfield "On Air" with ABC's NE/NW Radio

I am delighted to see that Tenterfield residents will finally receive New England ABC after a major upgrade to the equipment required to receive the signal from Tamworth. I have been pursuing this issue with the ABC for a number of years. Local residents can now listen by tuning into FM 88.9 to enjoy local news content and programming.

### UNE/DPI Gains Funding to Research Two Climate Change Projects

Two projects, funded by the Federal Government's Climate Change Research Program, will be undertaken by the UNE/DPI Partnership. They are:

- NSW cereal, cotton, sheep and beef systems - to research and define the variance of carbon contained in pools of soils from major land use soil type combinations.
- Winter rain fed cereals - to measure nitrous oxide emissions from winter rain fed cereals under various treatments including different row placements of crops and the inclusion of legumes in the rotation.

The Glen Innes Agricultural Research Station has a lot of information dating back to 1934, which could be very beneficial. I hope that the Station is able to participate in this research.

### Over \$62M for New England Schools

The following are the total amounts announced by the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, under Round 1 and 2 of the Federal Government's Primary Schools for the 21st Century Program. The funding will be used for the construction and refurbishment of major infrastructure, including libraries, multi-purpose halls and other much needed upgrades of facilities. The following is a list of the districts that have received funding:

Armidale	\$15,720,000
Tamworth	\$25,950,000
Inverell	\$6,850,000
Tenterfield	\$2,260,000
Glen Innes	\$5,010,000
Quirindi	\$4,100,000
Uralla District & Walcha District	\$1,850,000
Guyra	\$420,000

*Individual school grants can be obtained by contacting my office.*

### \$8.1M for the Bullimbal School

The new Bullimbal Special School, funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments, opposite Tamworth High School will offer further impetus to the wonderful work of the teachers, assistants and volunteers.



Bullimbal student, Tyler Downey, helps turn the first sod to commence work assisted by State Member for Tamworth, Peter Draper, Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor and watched by Jim White (Department of Education & Training), Mal Donald (Principal, Bullimbal School), parent representatives, staff and students.

## \$5M to Tamworth Indoor Sports Centre



The efforts of the Tamworth Basketball Association and the Tamworth Netball Association, supported by the Tamworth Regional Council, have been rewarded with a \$5M grant from the Federal Government's Community Infrastructure Program. The facility will cater for a wide range of indoor sports. It will be an enormous boost for local sporting organisations in their bids to host local, regional, state and national events.

Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, the Hon. Anthony Albanese MP with Tony Windsor and members of the Tamworth Basketball and Netball Associations at the announcement of \$5m for the Tamworth Indoor Sports Centre.

## Rail Level Crossings to Get Safer

Six New England Electorate level crossings will be safer following the Federal Government's decision to install boom gates, flashing lights and bells via their Boom Gates for Rails Crossings Program.

The crossings to be upgraded are as follows:

- Gostwyck Road - Kelly's Plains
- Railway Street - Nemingha
- Kootingal Road - Kootingal
- Gap Road - The Gap
- Magpie/Quirindi Road - Spring Ridge
- Lowes Creek Road - Quipolly

## Government Funding for Landcare

There have been some concerns about the future of Landcare, however a recent four year commitment from the Federal Government to fund Landcare facilitators is a welcome outcome that will provide some certainty to the continuation of the important services available to the farming community through this program.

It is particularly important that as agricultural practices change to tackle climate change issues, Landcare facilitators are available to assist in disseminating information and are able to work with farmers to ensure a transition that maintains and even enhances productivity in a sustainable way.

## Electorate's Councils to Receive \$4.3M

The following are the total amounts that each Council will receive via the Federal Government's Community Infrastructure Program:

Tamworth Regional Council	\$1,295,000
Inverell Shire Council	\$533,000
Armidale Dumaresq Council	\$495,000
Tenterfield Shire Council	\$410,000
Glen Innes Severn Shire Council	\$401,000
Gwydir Shire Council	\$352,000
Liverpool Plains Shire Council	\$343,000
Uralla Shire Council	\$271,000
Guyra Shire Council	\$100,000
Walcha Shire Council	\$100,000

## Tribute to Joan Rankine

Joan Rankine who recently passed away, will be sadly missed by the local community and remembered for her many years of tireless work as the President of the Tamworth and District War Widows' Guild. Her efforts have been greatly appreciated by the many War Widows, their families and friends whom she has assisted and supported in so many ways. Joan was indeed an extraordinary person.

## Round 1 National School Pride Program- \$8.88M to NE/NW Schools

Each school has been allocated up to \$200,000 based upon size of the school for maintenance and minor building works.

## Tenterfield Preschool Kindergarten's 50th Anniversary



*(Photo courtesy of Tenterfield Star).*

Tony Windsor, Leah Kernot and Lyn Windsor at the 50th Anniversary Open Day

## Country NSW Seats in Latest Electoral Redistributions Should be Retained

The last redistribution saw the loss of the seat of Gwydir and the creation of the seat of Parkes, which cobbled together localities that had little in common with each other, apart from being in regional NSW.

I will be arguing that the Gunnedah area should be included in the seat of New England, as the economic and social links with the rest of the lower New England are much stronger than their links with Dubbo and other Parkes Electorate centres.

## West Tamworth After Hours Medical Services Gets \$100,000

This grant will assist Peel Health Care to provide people of the Tamworth area the opportunity of visiting a doctor after hours instead of having to visit the hospital emergency department.

## Amendments Needed to Independent Youth Allowance Changes

The whole issue of country children's education and accommodation at university needs to be reviewed, as it is obvious that a system based on proving "financial independence" is not working to reduce costs for the education of country children.

The fact that most country students have to live away from home to achieve a university education means that a "one model fits all" will disadvantage country people.

As well, the retrospective nature of the changes penalise those students currently working during a gap year.

I congratulate students at Tamworth's McCarthy College for organising a petition asking for changes to be made so that country students would not be penalised for the simple reason that they live in country areas. I believe that despite assurances to the contrary from officials close to the Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, country people will be disadvantaged by the changes.

I will continue to follow this up to ensure fairness to all rather than advantage based upon where students live.

## Tribute to Keith Singh

Keith Singh passed away in April. His presence, wise counsel and wonderful community involvement will be sorely missed. He was an extremely positive man who always saw the upside of any given issue and his sense of humour made him a pleasure to be with.

Tamworth, the local region and many other locations will continue to benefit for many years as a result of Keith's hard work and commitment to the many community projects that he was involved in.

## Allegations of Non-Attendance in Parliament Completely Incorrect

The inference that I don't attend Parliament is completely wrong. In my 18 years as a representative in both State and Federal Parliaments, there have been very few days when I have been absent from the building and only then because of funerals, family, sickness or other clashing parliamentary and electorate duties.

During the 42nd Parliament, 1,236 decisions have been made. Of these, about 200 differences of opinion have existed where a decision (vote) is formally called. About 113 of these have been political or vexatious in their intent. Of the remainder, some 30 have been Second Reading Amendments where the Opposition "stage-manage" their opposition to a Bill only to vote for the Bill on all but 8 occasions.

Being an Independent there are some votes taken where I disagree with both the Government and Opposition. In these cases I abstain from voting. Occasionally, political party MPs abstain (as was the case when National Party MP Kay Hull abstained from voting for the sale of Telstra).



Tony Windsor with Independent Member for Lyne Rob Oakeshott, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young and young people affected by the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance eligibility criteria at a media conference at Parliament House, Canberra.

## National Broadband Network Welcome

Telecommunications infrastructure is the railway of the 21st Century and will further reduce the tyranny of distance, smallness and remoteness. Care must be taken that those most disadvantaged through recent market driven decisions based on greed and profit should receive priority access. It would be preferable that other factors, possibly the inadequacy and/or cost of current services in some communities, be considered. After all, the Government should govern for all Australians and not just for capital cities and coastal regions.



## Schools Canberra Visit

Students from St Josephs, Barraba, St Michaels, Manilla and St Josephs, Tamworth during their visit to Parliament House.

## ATO Looking for Volunteers

The ATO's Tax Help program is seeking community volunteers and groups to help low-income earners with their tax responsibilities between July and October. Basic arithmetic skills and a desire to help others are the main qualifications.

Further information on the Tax Help program is available by calling 13 28 61 or at [www.ato.gov.au](http://www.ato.gov.au)

## Carbon Legislation Targets Too Small

I voted against the Government's proposed Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme on the grounds that a target of 5% reduction in emissions would not require a market mechanism of the type promoted by the Government. Such a target could easily be achieved by more natural solutions such as using vegetation and soils and encouraging renewable energy sources.

The United States' approach to climate change will be paramount to Australia's position on this issue and at this stage the details are still unknown.

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*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.*

## Congratulations

**Congratulations to the following people who have celebrated their special Birthdays and Wedding Anniversaries**

### 60th (Diamond) Anniversaries

- **Tamworth:**  
Raymond & Judy (Ethel) Pullman  
Len & Doreen Walton  
Aubrey & Nancy Parsons  
John & Jean Mitchell  
Jack & Betty McGilvray  
Alfred and Lois Small
- **Glen Innes:**  
Roy & Belva Irish  
Ken & Nancy Moxey  
Donald & Daphne Davidson
- **Armidale:**  
Arthur & Kathleen Nixon  
George & Mona Ware  
Charles N & Mary G Gibbon
- **Inverell:**  
David & Valerie Mansfield  
Bert & Aileen Thomas  
Allan & Betty Melba Sloman
- **Walcha:**  
Allen & Shirley Mason  
Malcolm & Doreen Kirkman
- **Legume:**  
Leonard Allen & Lorna Grayson
- **Kootingal:** Kevin & Eileen Phillips
- **Barraba:** Percy & Betty Sawyer
- **Uralla:** Ken & Joyce Prowse
- **Guyra:** Jack & Betty Riordan

### 65th Anniversaries

- **Armidale:** Gordon & Hazel Clark

### 70th Anniversaries

- **Carlingford:**  
Raymond & Phyllis Mowbray
- **Guyra:**  
Robert Burleigh & Hope Betts
- **Inverell:** Arthur & Nola May

### 100th Birthdays

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

### 102nd Birthday

Edith Madrick of Walcha

**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.**