

Tony Windsor MP

The New England Independent

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

April 2010



Mr Alun Davies and Senator Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy discussing the telecommunication needs of the New England Electorate.

Armidale Chosen as a "First Release Site" for the National Broadband Network (NBN) Rollout

The announcement made by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, that Armidale will be a "First Release Site" for the rollout of the National Broadband Network is excellent news that will lay the foundation for future rollouts to other parts of the New England of a high speed fibre to the premise network. A successful rollout will negate the vast distances that we have in Australia and will help make our local businesses more competitive by opening up more opportunities for our region. The decision goes back to a meeting held in Tamworth in September 2009 attended by the Minister and a large group of community leaders. Thanks to Alun Davies (formerly of Telstra Country Wide) and David Jones (a Consultant Engineer and Inverell Shire Councillor) for their commitment in presenting the region's case by putting together a proposal that included support letters from Councils and individuals and for attending the forums and meetings on our behalf.

Bundarra's Grace Munro Aged Care Centre to Stay Open

The news that the Department of Health and Aging has approved the transfer of 11 aged care places to the locally run Grace Munro Aged Care Centre from the former operators H.N. McLean Retirement Village is a great reward for the magnificent effort by the Bundarra community. The hurdles they had to overcome would have scared off most administrators and officials. The community effort was unwavering and deeply committed in their belief despite the road blocks that were put in their way and the lack of cooperation from certain areas. Rather than go through the whole history, recognition should be given to the involved community members - all volunteers.

Congratulations to the Grace Munro Committee being Chairman, John Oaksford, Secretary, Peggy Weiss and members Daryll Hall, Bruce McLean, Gwenda and Roger Dezius. Well done also to Garry Young, Phil Cowdery, Gary Cracknell, Chris Lavender, Bill Doak and all the people of Bundarra that showed their support in so many ways. The assistance from the Department of Health and Ageing and the Minister for Ageing, Justine Elliot and her office should also be recognised. Bundarra's aged community can now continue to grow old and enjoy the company of friends and relatives in their own community.

To the Electorate

Since my last newsletter, some battles have been won whilst others continue to be fought.

I am delighted that the Bundarra community have won their battle to takeover the Grace Munro Aged Care Centre.

However, farmers around Bundarra and across to Barraba continue their battle for Exceptional Circumstance drought assistance. The Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, has informed me he will accept a revised application.

The Liverpool Plains farmers have had a victory in the NSW Supreme Court over mining company access to their lands for exploration purposes.

West Armidale has been chosen as one of five areas across Australia to be a "First Release Site" for trialling the rollout of the National Broadband Network and funding has been allocated to many large and small community infrastructure projects.

Funding for a full feasibility study into the Barraba Water Pipeline should also be forthcoming in the very near future.

I welcome the placing of national health reform firmly on the agenda as for too long the State and Federal Governments have played the blame game to the detriment of the Australian people.

I trust that you find this newsletter informative and invite you to contact me should you have any questions or issues you may wish to discuss.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Windsor".

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

Uralla Thunderbolt Book Launch



I was pleased to attend the launch of the book "Thunderbolt - The Scourge of the Ranges" with Kevin Ward, Barry Sinclair, Co- Author, and James Hamilton, Author.

\$5M for Hunter New England Area Health Chronic Disease Management Welcomed

Hunter New England Area Health is to be congratulated on their initiative in designing a program for chronic disease management in regional and rural communities. Their initiative will allow a number of smaller centres to be connected to the National Broadband Network so that they can better manage chronic health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease and will enable access to specialist care through the telehealth system. The program should help reduce the impact of these diseases on patients and their families and ease the burden of isolation and travel.

\$981,000 Funding for Local Infrastructure Projects Welcome

The following Councils have received funding from the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program for projects that will enable them to upgrade, repair, and construct a range of community facilities. Project details are available on my website.

Gunnedah	\$164,000
Guyra	\$30,000
Glen Innes Severn	\$155,000
Inverell Shire Council	\$210,000
Liverpool Plains	\$131,000
Tenterfield	\$160,000
Uralla	\$101,000
Walcha	\$30,000

\$521,000 for New Bike Paths a "Ride" in the Right Direction

The recent announcement by the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Services, Anthony Albanese, that new bike tracks will be funded in Inverell, Quirindi, Tamworth, Manilla and Barraba is welcomed and will create 32 short terms local jobs plus work experience placements.

\$25.54M Trade Training a Boost for New England Schools

Late last year the Federal Government announced that they were to establish Training Centres at 17 recipient high schools so that students will have increased opportunities to learn trade skills as a part of their high school curriculum. The following schools were successful:

- Glen Innes High
- Emmaville Central
- Tenterfield High
- MacIntyre High Inverell
- Ashford Central
- Bundarra Central
- Inverell High
- William Cowper Tamworth
- Tamworth High
- Bullimbal School Tamworth
- Oxley High Tamworth
- Farrer High Tamworth
- Manilla Central
- Peel High Tamworth
- Walcha Central
- Warialda High
- Bingara Central
- Gwydir Shire Council Automotive Workshop

Sunnyside Section of New England Highway Safety Upgrade Finally Completed

The \$13.5M project has now been completed. The work has removed a number of substandard curves and improved the intersection with Sunnyside Road. This section of road has had a high crash history over the past ten years. A number of important Aboriginal archaeological sites and a cultural site have been protected. The official opening ceremony was held on site on 29 January. Congratulations to all involved with this important safety upgrade.

\$273,000 for New England Volunteer Groups

At the end of last year the Federal Government announced grants totalling \$273,000 for 95 not-for-profit organisations in the New England Electorate. These groups are the backbone of our communities and provide for the wide and varied interests of residents, whether they are in the arts and crafts, sport, environment, IT or the many other fields that make our communities vibrant and interesting places. The large number of grants is another indication of how important voluntary organisations are to the communities within the New England region.

Congratulations and Well Done, Cameron



Cameron Young from Oxley High School in Tamworth was selected to attend the National Youth Roundtable at Parliament House Canberra. Whilst there, he caught up with me and looked very comfortable in my chair. Cameron met the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and presented a paper to the Roundtable titled "A cultural change for the youth of Australia".



Peter Draper and I had the pleasure of attending the New England Institute of TAFE's announcement of the \$2.1M investment in the Tamworth TAFE.

\$2.1M Investment for Tamworth Tafe

Australia has an acknowledged shortage of workers in many different employment sectors so this funding is very welcome. The investment will be used for necessary upgrades and refurbishments, including two related sections within the Faculty of Business being combined in one location that will result in more productivity and provide students with a wider range of programmes and delivery options. Other improvements will be the replacement of electrical boards, the upgrading of three existing stairwells and the entrance doors of Block L to facilitate disabled access. This follows a recent grant of \$6.3M for automotive and electro-technology training facilities. From 2006 to 2008 the average number of students at Tamworth TAFE was 8,754 and in 2009 this was increased by approx 2% or another 170 students.

It is pleasing that both the Federal and State Governments have recognised the value of a positive regional TAFE presence.

Barraba Water Pipeline Case Well Received by Parliamentary Secretary for Water

Following a meeting in January between Tamworth Regional Council Mayor, James Treloar, the Member for Tamworth Peter Draper and myself, a joint strategy to help fund a pipeline from Split Rock Dam to Barraba was progressed. The failure of the second bore at the Barraba Golf Club reinforced the urgent need for a permanent solution.

I subsequently asked the Prime Minister in Question Time if he was aware of the urgency of Barraba's water supply situation.

The outcome of the question was that the Parliamentary Secretary for Water, the Hon Dr Mike Kelly, visited Tamworth to meet with representatives of the Barraba community, the Tamworth Regional Council, the State Member for Tamworth, Peter Draper, and myself.

Dr Kelly was told that the bore trials had been finalised and that the pipeline was the only sustainable option. Dr Kelly stated that he would meet with the NSW Water Minister, Phil Costa, to discuss the issue and Peter Draper also indicated that he would follow this up with his own meeting with the Minister. I will be keeping in touch with Dr Kelly to make sure that the progress made during the meeting continues.

Paula McIver and Danny Ballard join TRC Mayor James Treloar, Member for Tamworth, Peter Draper, myself and the Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Dr Mike Kelly to discuss the Barraba Water Pipeline in Tamworth.



\$551,000 for Tamworth Regional Council Community Infrastructure Projects

Projects funded under the second round of the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program will enhance community facilities at Nundle, Kootingal, Bendemeer, Manilla, Barraba and Tamworth through the upgrading of community buildings, sporting facilities, parks and recreational areas. I commend Tamworth Regional Council for recognising the needs of both their large and small communities. These projects are chosen by the community reflecting the community's interests at this time. Details can be viewed on my website.

"Missing Link" in Inland Rail Concept Approved

I am pleased that the New South Wales and Queensland Governments have finally recognised the construction of the Inland Rail Link between Moree and Toowoomba (via Yelarbon) as an opportunity to help develop inland Australia and not as a source of leakage between the States' economies.

The link could lead to the opening of a coal mine near Ashford in the north of the New England Electorate and create further jobs in rail and rolling stock maintenance.

The proposal to construct an Inland Railway from Melbourne to Brisbane and eventually to Darwin has been mooted for over a century, however over the past 13 years it has been promoted by a number of parties, not the least being Everal Compton and his ATEC consortium.

Welcome Gunnedah to New England - Farewell Bingara

At the upcoming Federal election later this year, some changes have been made to the boundaries of the New England Electorate. I would like to warmly welcome the people of the Gunnedah Shire and sadly say farewell to the people of Bingara.

As a previous Member for Tamworth who represented the people of Gunnedah in the NSW Parliament, I welcome the opportunity to once again seek the support of people in the Gunnedah Shire at the next election, this time in the Federal Parliament.

To the people of the former Bingara Shire, I say thank you for your support since I entered the Federal Parliament in 2001. It has been a great honour to be your representative and I look forward to continuing to represent the people of Bingara up until the election. I will maintain a close interest in your progress and development and will be happy to continue to help wherever possible.

Murrurundi Rail Tunnel Update

I recently asked the Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government, Anthony Albanese, during Question Time for an update on the progress of the Murrurundi Tunnel.

The Minister indicated that while the project was taking some time to get to the actual construction stage it is definitely moving forward. The Australian Rail Track Corporation and industry users were deliberating over the most beneficial option and whether a new tunnel or a new route was more preferable. A decision on this should be available by the middle of this year.

Having been involved in many of the meetings regarding this project over the years, I will be closely following this and will report back to the electorate. The Government has committed \$290M for the project whilst the remainder will come from the ARTC and industry.

A Quick Response to Fire at the Bryon Arcade in Inverell

The fire that engulfed the Bryon arcade was a tragedy for all concerned, however it was pleasing to see quick responses from Federal, State and Local Government authorities in offering assistance. The excellent response of emergency services no doubt saved lives and helped contain the fire from spreading to neighbouring businesses and residences. The response of Centrelink and the NSW Department of Community Services to help alleviate the suffering of those affected was encouraging. The strong community support for those affected also showed how country people pull together in times of need. My Inverell and Tamworth offices are available to help with any enquiries or concerns.

Tony Windsor meets with Byron Arcade residents left homeless by the fire.

Farmers Win in Supreme Court Over Mining Exploration

The NSW Supreme Court found in favour of the Alcorn and Brown families from the Liverpool Plains who with the help of the Australian Farmers' Fighting Fund have been challenging BHP Billiton's access to their farms to conduct exploration drilling for coal.

The stand has been seen as a test case that has gained the support of not only the Liverpool Plains farming community through the Caroon Coal Action Group, but more broadly by the farm sector worried about the impacts of mining exploration on prime agricultural land and its water resources.

The decision by the NSW Supreme Court should now bring together the NSW Government, the mining industry and farming interests around the table to look at how all sectors can co-exist equitably rather than one sector overriding the other without due respect for its impact on the economic, environmental and social fabric of a region.

This decision in the Supreme Court should now also bring both the Federal Government and Opposition to the table to support my amendment to the Water Act which states:

- 1. Prior to exploration licences being granted for subsidence mining operations on floodplains that have underlying groundwater systems forming part of the Murray-Darling system inflows, an independent expert study must be undertaken to determine the impacts of the proposed mining operations on the connectivity of groundwater systems, surface water and ground water flows and water quality and**
- 2. Where a substantial risk is identified, exploration licences must not be granted**

If the Government and Opposition accept my amendment to the Water Act, much of the legal argument will be overcome as it will identify areas that can be mined and areas that should be left alone – something that even the Minerals Council of Australia and the NSW Minerals Council have mooted. This would save much time and money for all sides.





Congratulations Kristen

The 2009 ABC New England North West Heywire Competition winner, Kristen Heal, met with me in Canberra during the annual Heywire Winners gathering. Kristen's piece was titled "Bright Lights and Big City pale into comparison with the reality of life on a family farm". Kristen is School Captain of Bingara Central School.

Volunteers Required for the Tax Help Program

The ATO is seeking the assistance of volunteers to help low income earners with their tax responsibilities from July to October. Enthusiasm, basic arithmetic skills and a desire to help others are the main qualifications.

They are also seeking the assistance of community groups that could operate Tax Help as well as supply venues to use as Tax Help Centres.

Further information is available by contacting Daryl at the ATO on 49231401.

National Servicemen's Association of Australia Notice

The NSAA is trying to get in touch with over 150,000 former National Service personnel to advise them of their eligibility to receive both the Australian Defence Medal and the Anniversary of National Services Medal (1951-1972) as well as advising them of the dedication of their Memorial in Canberra in September this year. Further information is available by contacting the NSAA Sub Branch in your area (details available at www.nasho.asn.au) or by contacting my office.

The National Service Memorial will be constructed on the eastern precinct of the Australian War Memorial. It will hopefully be finished by Anzac Day with a dedication in September 2010. The President of the NSAA, Earl Jennings, has stated that this is a long overdue dedication to all National Servicemen especially to the 212 who died.

Free Water Safety Dvd Available

A free water safety DVD has been produced by the water safety advocate, Laurie Lawrence, and the Federal Department of Health and Aging. Tragically, 32 children under the age of five drowned last year with 19 of those in swimming pools. Water safety is everybody's responsibility. The Living with Water DVD is available by contacting my office on 1300 301 839 or by calling into my Tamworth or Inverell offices.

Health Reform Urgently Needed

When I first entered the NSW Parliament in 1991, the proportion of the State Budget that was spent on health was approximately 20%. It is now over 40%.

A portfolio that is absorbing such a large amount of the State's Budget cannot go much beyond that proportion or other essential services will suffer. As health is such an important issue, I am keen to obtain further details regarding what the Federal Government's proposal means for the delivery of health services to country Australians. At some stage it must be recognised that to achieve a vibrant health service catering for all Australians, more money will have to be injected into the system. Management can only do so much. It is not the miracle cure, nor is juggling the same amount of money.

All the debates so far about local boards versus regional boards or whether the States or the Commonwealth are in charge may achieve something at the margins but none of them are likely to achieve the outcomes that Australia and especially country Australia deserve. The feedback I have been receiving is that people are genuinely sick and tired of the blame game between the States and the Federal Governments. Health is one issue that all parties will eventually have to agree upon.

Vision New England Summit Unite Groups on 21 Resolutions

Last year's Vision New England Summit provided an opportunity for groups to unite in support of each other's quests to identify and deliver solutions to issues that impact on people across the New England Electorate. Over forty community organisations were represented. Twenty-one resolutions were enthusiastically supported and will continue to be followed up from my office. The full details of the resolutions can be found on my website.

At this early date, Resolution 1 "that the summit endorse the formation of a small working group consisting of three people to put together a National Broadband submission" and "all interested parties send short letters of support including commitment to use the NBN, how their community will use the NBN and how can they help the smooth rollout in New England" has been considerably progressed with Armidale being a first release site for the NBN rollout.



Dr Bruce Stewart supporting resolution 16 "that the Vision New England Summit supports examining the feasibility of rural dental programmes at the UNE".

Uralla Shire Community Climate Consensus Forum Wins "Highly Commended International Award"

Congratulations to the Uralla Shire and the Uralla Community Climate Consensus Forum (U3CF) for competing with Australia's best and winning a highly commended award in Category 1 of the 2009 International Association for Public Participation Australasia (IAP2) Core Value Awards for "Public Participation Enhanced Decision Making". The Forum was responsible for 40 recommendations to the Council on adaption and mitigation to the challenges presented by climate change and the increasing need to be sustainable.

A DVD has also been made of the U3CF's presentation to the Sustainable Living Expo (SLEX). I was delighted to officiate at a ceremony and help publicise and celebrate the installation of solar panels on the Uralla library building.



Mayor of Uralla Shire, Ron Filmer and General Manager, Tom O'Connor at the unveiling of a Community Information Sign – "Energy Direct from the Sun".

STOP PRESS - Youth Allowance Update

The Youth Allowance legislation has now been passed through the Senate following an agreement reached between the Government and the Opposition. Details are available on the Centrelink website www.centrelink.gov.au or by calling 132 490. Please don't self assess as everyone's circumstances are different.

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Please contact my office 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. **Extra information on articles in this Newsletter** - My Newsletter sometimes contains summaries of specific information. If you require further details on any of the items mentioned in my Newsletter, please don't hesitate to contact my office for assistance.

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by Tony Windsor MP

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Congratulations

Congratulations to the following people who have celebrated special milestones over recent months.

90th Birthdays

- **Ashford:** Mrs Eugenie Gilbey
- **Inverell:** Mr Ken L Wyndham
- **Tamworth:** Mr Reg Lye, Mrs Winifred May Smith
- **Armidale:** Mrs Doris Stahlbut
- **Sunnyside:** Mr Claude Haddock
- **Walcha:** Mrs Bessie Jean Lockyer
- **Quirindi:** Mrs Rose Angelina Clarke

100th Birthdays

- **Emmaville:** Mrs Irene Thompson
- **Walcha:** Mrs Mill Whitehead
- **Inverell:** Mr Abraham Pevy
- **Tamworth:** Mrs Kath Jones
- **Armidale:** Mr Alex Mullins

50th Wedding Anniversaries

- **Tamworth:** Dick & Veronica Lord, Philip & Joy Griffith, David & Anne Davie, Jim & Lola Ebert, Ron & Brenda Salter, Barry & Joan Lingwood, John & Elva Grills
- **Bundarra:** John & Barbara Stibbard
- **Armidale:** Bob & Jan Patricks, Brian & Jeanette Baker, Roger & Eva Roan
- **Woolomin:** Ronald & Fenetta Hammond
- **Werris Creek:** Don & Margaret Stewart
- **Delungra:** Jim & Beryl Townsend
- **Inverell:** Odney & Ann Coote, Kevin & Jane Leader
- **Walcha:** John & Jill Wells
- **Kootingal:** John & Judith Martin, Ian & Margaret Green
- **Daruka:** Kenneth & Helen Moss
- **Quirindi:** Bruce & Iris Wheatley
- **Emmaville:** Richard & Heather Reynolds
- **Ashford:** Lance & Edeline Sinclair
- **Currabubula:** Danny & Dorothy Maher, John & Nerelle Charles
- **Guyra:** Ronnie & Joan Mcleod

60th Wedding Anniversaries

- **Tamworth:** Wal & Fay Sims, Jack & Nancy Cruickshank, Joseph & Marie Shanahan, William & Heather Quick, Bill & Elaine Edmunds, Neville & Barbara Jenner, Raymond & Doreen Roworth, Dennis & Margaret Bailey, Trevor & Daphne Etheridge
- **Inverell:** Arthur & Patsy Thomas, Bob & Myrtle Romer, William & Beryl Dick
- **Armidale:** Kevin & Coraline Polson, Alan & Barbara Docherty, Doug & Jean Cooper
- **Nemingha:** Stan & Joan Benson
- **Ashford:** Jack & Lorna Minos
- **Tenterfield:** Raymond & Thora Euston
- **Barraba:** Kevin & Betty Brodbeck
- **Glen Innes:** Cyril & Daph Horder

61st Wedding Anniversary (message not sent for 60th)

- **Walcha:** William & Phyllis Wark

65th Wedding Anniversary

- **Moonbi:** Max & Betty Townsend

70th Wedding Anniversary

- **Barraba:** David & Valerie McVicar

71st Wedding Anniversary

- **Tamworth:** James & Barbara Vance

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.