



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TONY WINDSOR MP
INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

Suite 2, Level 1
307 Peel Street
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

All Mail: PO Box 963
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Ph: (02) 6761 3080

Toll Free: 1800 66 8855

Fax: (02) 6761 3380

e-mail: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

Web Page: www.tonywindsor.com.au

MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor disappointed but not surprised at Equine Centre knockback

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has today expressed his disappointment at the Federal Government's refusal to assist with the development of a National Livestock and Equine Centre at Tamworth, but he is not surprised.

"The Federal Government and particularly the National Party has spent the past eighteen months trying to find ways of preventing the project going ahead rather than embracing the need for a 'State of the Art' livestock and equine centre in Australia," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that it was now time for the Group to reassess its position in relation to funding options, review some of the comments made by Professor Chudleigh and move forward.

"It was obvious from the report done by Professor Chudleigh that the assessment did not take into account any possibility of growth in the industry once a modern well-equipped facility of international standard was developed.

The public utterances that Professor Chudleigh made in recent weeks since his visit to Tamworth have all been very positive so I am a bit surprised at the negative perspective taken in his report.

It is regrettable that the Federal Government have delayed progress for so long but that does not mean that other sources of funds or a slightly downsized facility could not go ahead," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor thought a more constructive path to have taken if Professor Chudleigh found fault with the Report would have been to place conditions on the release of any Federal funds.

"Professor Chudleigh was critical of the lack of visible industry contribution to the project. By placing a condition of Federal funding on the proviso of obtaining industry funds for the project would have challenged the industry groups to come in behind its funding and therefore assure its success," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor was critical of the New England North West Area Consultative Committee in relation to its conduct and politicisation of the issue.

"The ACC funded the initial feasibility study for the group and accepted it.

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This was then used by the Group to successfully convince the NSW State Treasury to contribute over \$3m to the project and now the project is knocked back following a Federal Government sponsored review of the Report.

The Area Consultative Committee also recommended the Group apply for funding under the Regional Tourism Grants program just before the last Federal election, knowing full well that there was a maximum of \$100,000 available when over \$3m was being sought and in fact had a total amount of \$4m available for all of Australia," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor was also critical of the duplicity of the Minister responsible for the Regional Solutions Program, John Anderson.

"Mr Anderson says that the Government can't fund this project because 1 out of 3 feasibility studies cast doubt on its viability when in the past month, the same Minister has allocated \$4m to the Stockman's Hall of fame in Longreach.

Mr Anderson would be aware that the Stockman's Hall of Fame has made a net operating loss for the year 2000/01 of \$585,375 on top of a loss for the previous year of \$545,734.

Mr Anderson should have the decency to at least be consistent in relation to spending of Federal, taxpayer money.

Mr Anderson may like to also release the feasibility study relating to the funding of the Fisherman's Hall of Fame in Hervey Bay in Queensland.

That would also makes for interesting reading!" Mr Windsor said.