



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Senate Hearings Flesh Out Problems

The Independent Member for New England, Mr Tony Windsor today said that very great uncertainty existed over the future of higher education funding after today's Senate hearings held at Armidale.

The Senate committee is inquiring into the impacts of changes to funding as well as new regulatory legislation contained in the Governments Higher Education Package.

Mr Windsor attended the hearings with the Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay and listened to a range of speakers including students, Community Leaders, National Tertiary Education Union members, as well as the Vice Chancellor Ingrid Moses.

Mr Windsor said, "The common thread on listening to the submissions and the questioning by various Senators is that there are still suspicions and concerns about the proposed changes, particularly in relation to country based Universities".

"Although changes have been made in terms of the regional loading arrangements to take into account the external student component of the formula no one seems to know the overall impact of these changes on the UNE.

Obviously this information needs to be available and be properly assessed to understand the financial status of the proposed changes to the UNE".

Mr Windsor said, "There was solid opposition expressed at the inquiry to the move towards voluntary student unionism and the industrial relations changes to the terms of employment conditions for lecturers at the University".

"Students organisations raised the concern that increases in fee, and HEC's fees was beyond the capacity of many country families and would rule many regional people out of a University education".

Mr Windsor said, "The Mayor of Armidale- Dumaresq Council, Brian Chetwynd and General Manager Shane Burns outlined the impact on Armidale and the surrounding region of any downside in funding arrangements".

"Given the recent proposed changes in terms of Industrial Relations and the total opposition by the university sector it will not auger well for the passage of the four educations bills through the Parliament".

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