



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**TONY WINDSOR MP**  
**INDEPENDENT**  
**FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND**

Shop 5  
259 Peel Street  
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

**All Mail:** PO Box 963  
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

**Ph:** (02) 6761 3080  
**Toll Free:** 1300 301 839  
**Fax:** (02) 6761 3380  
**e-mail:** [Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au)  
**Web Page:** [www.tonywindsor.com.au](http://www.tonywindsor.com.au)

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

5 November 2003

### **Windsor Brings Concerns Over Sheltered Workshop Employment To Prime Minister**

The Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor, has responded to concerns raised at the Vision New England Summit over the future of Sheltered Workshops by raising the matter with the Prime Minister in Federal Parliament today.

Mr Windsor said, "The issue of continued employment security within sheltered workshops was highlighted at the Vision New England Summit in Armidale recently and again at a large public meeting held in Glen Innes on Thursday, 30 October, 2003."

Mr Windsor asked the Prime Minister, "Would he guarantee that those disabled people who want to continue to work in sheltered workshops will be able to do so under the reform measures, and that the unrealistic implementation date of December 2004 be extended to allow further consultation."

Mr Windsor said, "I was heartened by the Prime Minister's response and particularly his acknowledgement that we are discussing sheltered workshops and not an ordinary workplace issue. The Prime Minister has also agreed to look into the need to extend the time frame for implementation."

"The Term sheltered workshop has been historically been used to describe a workplace where people of different skill levels can work beside each other under skilled supervision with a view to social interaction as well as making an economic contribution."

"By focusing on what the community interprets as a sheltered workshop the Prime Minister has committed to a process of maintenance of employment. That is a positive step," Mr Windsor said.

"It is obvious that the so called Safety Net Consultative Process has not been conducted in such a way that the wishes and needs of people with disabilities and that of their country communities are taken into account. The message that I have heard from employees with disabilities of sheltered workshops is that they want to continue to work, and they do not want their disability ruling them out of work, social contact and the self esteem that comes out of sheltered workshops."

Mr Windsor also met with the National Industry Association for Disability Services Senior Advisor, Mr Paul O'Callaghan, to discuss the broader concerns of the supported employment sector and this meeting will be part of an ongoing process of gathering information to forward to the Minister.

"We have a new Minister in Kay Patterson and the representatives of disability service groups feel confident the new Minister understands the social value of sheltered workshops and will see that value placed back into the reform equation."

"I will work with the Minister by carrying forward the concerns that have been relayed to me in a constructive way as we all work to achieve a better outcome," Mr Windsor concluded.

Hansard attached

---

**For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 66 88 68**

# Hansard Extract

<b>Date</b>	04 November, 2003	<b>Database</b>	House Hansard
<b>Questioner</b>	Windsor, Antony, MP (New England, IND, Opposition)	<b>Responder</b>	Howard, John, MP (Bennelong, Prime Minister, LP)
<b>Page</b>	21848	<b>Proof</b>	Yes
<b>Source</b>	House	<b>Type</b>	Question without Notice
<b>Main Committee</b>	No	<b>Size</b>	2Kb

## Employment: People with Disabilities

[Mr WINDSOR](#) (2.40 p.m.) —My question is to the Prime Minister and it relates to the government's reforms to disability employment assistance. Given that the stress and fear of job losses being experienced by people with disabilities who are working in sheltered workshops such as the Glen Innes Sheltered Workshop has not been alleviated by the safety net consultative process, will the Prime Minister guarantee that those disabled people who want to continue to work or who want to enter work will not be shunted off into diversionary programs that will not provide the self-esteem of employment and that are not available in many country towns? Given that the time frames within the consultative process relating to the delivery of key viability information are proving impossible to meet, will the Prime Minister extend the current deadline for implementation beyond December 2004 to allow meaningful consultation with regional service providers?

[Mr HOWARD](#) —The government very strongly support sheltered workshops. We have committed additional resources to this area, and I can inform the honourable member for New England that I will talk to the Minister for Family and Community Services and, if there is an extension needed to achieve the goals the honourable member speaks of, I will have a look at that. It is in no way the policy of this government to in any way deny people with disabilities the opportunity to be engaged in meaningful work. I continue to choose to describe the sheltered workshop concept in that fashion because it is better understood in the community. It is our desire to support sheltered workshops. I will certainly examine what has been put forward and, if any changes are needed in the interests of properly implementing the government's policy, those changes will be made.