



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
Web Page: www.tonywindsor.com.au

MEDIA RELEASE

24 February 2004

WINDSOR CALLS FOR NEW ENGLAND HIGHWAY NATIONAL LINK STATUS TO BE MAINTAINED

Independent Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor, has said that any moves to downgrade the New England Highway as an important National link would be strenuously opposed.

Mr Windsor's comments followed an announcement by the NRMA that it would seek bipartisan support from all political parties that Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane be connected by a four lane highway within ten years.

The current road program has a time horizon of 17 years.

Mr Windsor said he had recently met with NRMA President, Ross Turnbull, in Canberra to discuss road funding issues with the National Highway System and the recently extended Roads to Recovery program as top agenda items.

"I came out in support of the NRMA's call for additional National Highway funding. The alarming facts are that whilst the Government currently raises \$13.6B from Fuel Excise, only 12% (\$1.6B) is spent on road funding for Local, Regional, State and National Highways, approximately \$400M of which is spent each year on the National Highway system. The NRMA has calculated that the financial cost of road trauma to be \$15B annually," Mr Windsor said.

"The general thrust of the meeting was about getting more funding towards the total National Highway System."

"Motorists currently pay 46 cents per litre in Fuel Excise and GST at the bowser. A little over 1 cent per litre is returned to new construction on the National Highway System," he said.

"Mr Turnbull assured me the agenda of the NRMA was not to make money from other National Highways but to create a bigger cake for the whole system, of which the Pacific and New England Highways are important sections."

...2/

For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080

“If the agenda were to change so that the Pacific received funds from other Highways I am sure that the eight Federal MPs along the New England Highway, which include the Federal Minister for Transport, John Anderson, would have something to say about that issue.”

Mr Windsor said although there had been a 73% increase in funding for the New England Highway since 2001, there was still an urgent need for a greater share of the Fuel Excise monies to be returned to roads.

“Given the death and trauma cost outlined by the NRMA it was evident that over time it was a worthwhile use of the funds in economic terms as well.”

He said the situation was compounded by the fact that the Commonwealth Government was caught out by the Auditor General in February, 2001 when it was discovered that the National Highway “road user charge” had been diverted to other uses which amount to a net loss of \$3B to the National Highway System.

“Recently the Government has also cancelled the Fuel Sales Grants Scheme that was put in place to alleviate the inequity of the GST on country motorists and diverted it to other uses,” he said.

“This will mean country motorists will pay up to 3 cents per litre more for petrol at the bowser,” Mr Windsor concluded.