



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Vision New England “gets teeth into” Government Policy - New Dental Health Scheme proposed

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has come out in support of the Independent Senators initiative to have Dental treatment covered under an extended Medicare arrangement.

Mr Windsor congratulated the Independents in the Senate for pushing for the inclusion of oral health in the soon to be announced Medicare Plus Package.

“The National Dental Scheme was dumped by the Coalition in 1996 and since then there has been an increasing problem for people on low incomes accessing appropriate dental treatment.

Obviously if dental health is neglected, other health problems arise as a result,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor has been campaigning on this issue since his election to the Federal Parliament in 2001 as well as whilst the State Member for Tamworth.

Mr Windsor is delighted that the Independents in the Senate have pursued the issue.

“This issue was raised and unanimously endorsed at the Vision New England Summit held in Armidale in October last year.

It is a good example of democracy working,” Mr Windsor said.

The Resolution passed at the Summit was, “Vision New England recognises the importance of dental health to health care generally and the inadequate access to dental care for low income individuals and families that the Summit recommends:

- a. *An approach be made to the Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon Tony Abbott, with a view to including dental work under Medicare and joint State/Federal Health Care Agreements so access to and affordability of dental care is increased in country areas.*

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- b. That given the projected shortages of dentists, the Vision New England Summit support the Australian Dental Association's call for scholarships to students from rural areas to undertake the study of dentistry.*

“The Independents have argued that the inclusion of dental health in Medicare would give thousands of patients more cost effective treatment with long term savings to the health budget.

With the first part of the resolution now looking likely to be accepted by the Government, we must now work to get more dentists, particularly in country areas, to meet the demand,” Mr Windsor said.