



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

11 March 2004

“Medicare Plus” example of need for Independents’ influence

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor, has congratulated the Independents in the Senate for their success in achieving amendments to the Medicare Plus Package passed by the Senate and accepted by the Government today.

“The success of the Independents in achieving amendments to improve legislation which was not going to meet the needs of Australians is a good example of the Parliament working.

It shows that the Government doesn’t have a mortgage on good ideas and that what they offer to the people of Australia as being their best offer can still be improved upon when the cross benches use their balance of power position responsibly to negotiate such improvements,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor identified Senators Harris, Harradine, Murphy and Lees as having negotiated improvements to legislation which include:

- New safety net thresholds of \$300 for lower income earners and \$700 for everybody else, spent “out-of-pocket” (ie not rebated on Medicare) on health services before the government covers 80% of any further medical bills for the year.
- Added bulk billing incentive payment of \$7.50 for doctors in non-metropolitan areas and all Tasmania for concession card holders and under 16s.
- Medicare rebate eligibility for Allied Health services like psychology or podiatry, as part of extended care plans.
- Some dental services for chronically ill patients to be covered by Medicare under the allied health extension.

Whilst Mr Windsor has welcomed the improvements to the initial package presented by the Government, he believes there is still more that needs to be done to make the Medicare system meet the current and future needs of all Australians.

“Australians want a better Medicare and indications are that they are prepared to contribute more for a fairer, stronger health care system,” Mr Windsor said.

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