



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

11 May 2004

“Labor” Budget from Coalition Government points to early Election Winners – Families, Carers, Mothers and Elderly

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has described the 2004-05 Federal Budget as being both economically and socially responsible with a view to an early election.

“The Coalition Government has regained some lost ground by delivering what I would describe as a ‘Labor’ Budget targeting families, carers, mothers and the elderly.

In doing so, the Coalition Government will now probably call an election sooner rather than later,” Mr Windsor said.

“The Budget delivers significant benefits to the wider community and at the same time retains a budget surplus.

The expected personal tax cuts announced in the Budget will give middle to high income earners a break and will address some of the ‘bracket creep’ that has occurred over the last few years,” Mr Windsor said.

However Mr Windsor also points out that the full sale of Telstra is still on the Government’s agenda.

Mr Windsor also believes that more could have been done with the treatment of taxing superannuation as we look to supporting an ageing population.

“It is only the superannuation surcharge tax on high income earners contributions that has been reduced from 14.5% to 7.5% over the next 3 years with nothing being done on the 15% contributions tax and 15% tax on fund investment earnings,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor has welcomed an increase in the formula that allocates aged care beds across Australia.

The Renewable Fuels Capital Grants Scheme will have a positive impact on the development of the ethanol industry and also will help bring natural gas to the region.

Mr Windsor was critical of the Government’s dismantling of the Fuel Sales Grant Scheme which was put in place in 2001 to compensate for the inequity of the GST on fuel prices in the country.

“This decision will effectively mean that country motorists will pay 1-3cents per litre more for their fuel,” Mr Windsor said.

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Positive announcements for the New England

- **New England Highway funding** has been confirmed for the Devils Pinch realignment with \$15Million to be spent this coming year and a further \$4.0million to be spent in 2005-06.
- Work at Duval Creek will also continue with another \$3.6million to be spent constructing a new bridge.
- **UNE Regional Loading** - UNE will benefit from being able to access the Regional Loading fund.
- **Aged care funding** - Increases in the funding formula and access to special subsidisation of small residential aged care facilities accreditation fees with under 25 beds& viability funding for rural and remote aged care providers.
- **Wine Equalisation Tax (WET)** has been reduced which will have benefits to our region's growing wine industry with spin offs also felt in the closely associated industries of tourism and hospitality.
- **Charities legislation definition** was raised at the New England Vision Summit with the legislation proposed having an adverse effect on existing charities. The Government has decided not to continue with the draft bill with the common law meaning now continuing to apply but adding non-profit childcare available to the public, self help groups with open and non-discriminatory membership and closed or contemplative religious orders that offer prayerful intervention to the public. Legislation will be introduced as soon as possible and be effective from 1 July 2004.
- **Regional Partnerships Program** has had an increase in funding of \$77.6 million over the next 4 years with \$14.4 million this year that should see the National Equine & Livestock Centre in Tamworth get funding support and also the Glen Severn Learning Centre in Glen Innes receive funding too.
- **ABC funding increase to come into effect in 2005.**
- **Regional Airport Security funding** – should see Tamworth, Armidale and Inverell airports upgraded.
- **The Rural Financial Counselling Service** to be funded for another 4 years with a review in 2005 to assess the efficiency of the current delivery arrangements.
- **Landcare program will continue.**
- **Community Legal Services Program increase.**

Further comment on the Budget will be made in the coming days following consultation with people from across the New England electorate and industry groups.