



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

Letter to Editor

7 July 2004

The Editor
Northern Daily Leader

Dear Editor,

Just a reply to Mark Rodda (NDL 7th July) 'claiming' my endorsement of a 'first promoted' idea of the National Party candidate in relation to a medical faculty at the University of New England. I draw your attention to a media release of 18th April 2002 where I posed a question to attendees at the Rural Doctors Summit held in Tamworth at the Tamworth Town Hall.

The question was and still is, "Why don't we train our medical students in a country environment? For instance, why shouldn't the University of New England become a Medical School?"

Further, I make no claim to this being my idea as it has been around for a long time as has the idea of the Federal Government taking over the funding and running of our hospitals to overcome the tennis match between the State and Federal Governments that we currently experience.

These and the other questions on my survey have been raised at numerous public meetings around the electorate. I thank those people who have taken the time to think about the issues and come up with possible solutions which they have told me about either at these meetings or by sending me a letter or email. The survey is a way of gauging broader community support for the ideas.

Politicians are NOT the font of all wisdom and drivers of only their own ideas. I am always keen to hear from people both from inside and outside the electorate with ideas that they believe can help our community and I am happy to help assist in finding ways to bring these ideas to fruition. However, it is always the people of our communities that drive the ideas even though some politicians like to claim the credit. A good idea doesn't care who has it and is fathered by many who deserve the credit.

Yours sincerely

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

Media Release of 18th April, 2002 is attached

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TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Ph: (02) 6761 3080
Toll Free: 1800 66 8855
Fax: (02) 6761 3380
e-mail: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 18th April 2002

Windsor poses challenges to Rural Doctors Summit

Independent Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor today posed the Rural Doctors Summit in Tamworth a number of challenges to address in a bid to have the participants focus on solutions to the shortage of Rural Doctors and other Allied Health professionals in country Australia.

Mr Windsor believes that the Health System must first of all re-establish trust between with the professional medical provider and the community and further that politicians, medico politicians and the community generally should look outside the current blame game and country-city debates and design their own future.

“There needs to be more flexibility in relation to health policy at a State and Federal level that recognises the differences that country doctors and specialists face on a daily basis,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor also highlighted the inequity of funding between country and city patients in terms of Medicare-funded health services. Country Australians receive less than half of the Medicare dollars per person per year when compared to capital city residents.

“In capital cities, \$149 per person per year of taxpayer money is spent. In country areas \$61 per person per year is spent.

The basic inequity of this scenario equates to \$500M per year.

The fact that this discrepancy has existed for some years is a disgrace,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor also raised some challenging questions that he thought the Summit should address including: -

- Are the Medical Colleges doing enough to help overcome the country doctor shortage in terms of the regulatory arrangements?
- Why don't the Medical Colleges facilitate the fast tracking of overseas trained doctors where it is deemed that local recruitment can't occur?
- Should the Medicare Levy be increased?
- Should country doctors receive a higher differential Medicare Rebate to encourage them to the country?
- Should patients make some form of financial contribution for visits to the doctor? What impact would that have on the supply and demand for doctors and their demographic and geographic location?
- Should there be Government funded training packages and “anti burnout” packages by way of locum relief for Doctors prepared to work in the country?
- What is required to keep Specialist medicos in country Australia by way of financial and technical support?
- Why don't we train our medical students in a country environment? For instance, why shouldn't the University of New England become a Medical School?
- What mentoring arrangements could assist young doctors to practice in the country?

“If the Summit can answer these questions, it will have progressed positively towards solving the Rural Doctor shortage which has become a vital issue for country Australians,” Mr Windsor said.

For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 668868