



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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New Medical school locations lacking vision! What about UNE - Armidale - a 'real' country location?

The announcement by the Federal Government of two new medical schools in New South Wales – one in Sydney and one in Wollongong - has been described by Independent Member for New England as “lacking vision”.

“I am amazed that country based Universities have again been overlooked in expanding the number of medical schools in Australia.

Research has shown that country students going to the city to study don't return to the country in the same numbers to put their skills to use.

This is why the Government introduced bonded scholarships for country students to study medicine.

To now have two new medical schools announced for Sydney and Wollongong and not the University of New England in Armidale is very much lacking vision and only paying lip service to fixing the problem of the lack of doctors in country Australia,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said that the media release from the Minister for Education Brendan Nelson contradicts itself when it comes to the benefits to rural and regional Australia.

“The Minister's statement indicates that ‘doctors graduating from the University of Wollongong medical school will be trained specifically to meet the general practice requirements of regional Australia. The focus of the new school accords with the Government's commitment to the ongoing and important need for access to medical services in rural and regional Australia.’

It goes on to contradict itself with the Minister saying ‘The new medical school opens not only opportunities for students in Wollongong and the Illawarra who wish to study medicine, but it will also enrich the local community by providing medical professionals who have grown up in the local area,’ Mr Windsor said.

“On the one hand, the Minister is saying Wollongong campus is there for ‘rural and regional Australia and on the other hand is focussing on just the students from Wollongong and Illawarra and enriching the local community.

That is exactly my point in having real country-based Universities being able to offer full medical training.

You could hardly call Wollongong a country experience with the Sydney metropolitan rail service running frequently throughout the day and as is often pointed out, many students meet their future spouses during their University years and they have careers to develop too which are more city based thereby placing another hurdle in getting the city trained doctor to move into the country.

Country kids need to be given the opportunity to study in the real country and therefore do as the Minister points out – enrich real country communities by providing medical professionals who have grown up there.

I'm sure students trained at a medical school at the University of New England would also ‘enrich’ Armidale and the surrounding communities of the New England and North West,” Mr Windsor said.

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