



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Survey shows strong support for Medical School at UNE

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor is very pleased with the response by people from across the New England electorate saying that it shows a strong consensus on most questions.

“A total of 8,380 people responded to the survey – an excellent response from people of the New England.

The number of respondents indicates how serious an issue health service is to people and that a great majority share similar views on how to address some of the problems,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that the results of the survey have been very definitive.

“There has been overwhelming support for a medical school at the University of New England.

This response is a strong indication that the people of New England are very much aware that if you train doctors and allied health professionals in the country, they are more likely to develop their lives in the country and remain in the country to practice their profession.

This is a message that I have been delivering to the Government for a long time now and I am looking forward to a positive announcement in the near future on this issue.

The strong support for the inclusion of dental work under Medicare is indicative of the importance that people place on the role of dental health in the overall wellbeing of an individual.

If you can't eat properly because of your dental problems, this means you may not be able to get the nutritional needs to be healthy and therefore the flow on costs to the Medicare system can be increased as a result.

Increasing levies or taxes is always a risk for a Government but I think from the positive response to increasing the Medicare levy from 1.5% to 2% if the higher levy was used to increase bulk billing levels, extend payments for dental care and deliver more services would be met by most in the community as something they could do to improve our health system.

The question of which level of Government should be in charge of our hospitals was the only question which had a spread of responses, however it seems that many are unhappy with the State Government's performance with only 20% of respondents indicating that they should be left in charge. 41% of the respondents were in favour of the Federal Government taking over the hospitals.

People have been very strong in their opposition to the area health service merger and despite the Minister's decision going against the wishes of the great majority of the people, I'm sure that everyone will now be keeping a very close eye on the changes to ensure promises made are implemented.

It was disturbing that nearly 60% of respondents said their doctor did NOT bulk bill,” Mr Windsor said.

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For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 66 8868

In commenting on the survey results, Mr Windsor thanked everyone who responded to the survey.

“I think more and more people want more input into the way their local Member represents THEIR views on issues important to the community.

It is very pleasing that so many people have taken the opportunity to tell me how they feel on this issue.

The number of respondents rivals the responses to the Telstra Survey.

I thank those who responded to the survey and all those who let me know their views via other avenues too.

Many people also took the opportunity to expand on their concerns about our health system through comments and letters attached to their surveys.

I will be passing on the results and comments to the Minister for Health and Shadow Minister for Health in seeking support for initiatives to be undertaken both on the National scale and at the local level,” Mr Windsor said.

Survey Results Summary

1. Do you support the merger of the New England Area Health Service with the Hunter Area Health Service?

93% NO - 2.3% Yes and 4.7 Undecided

2. Dental Health – Should dental work be covered by Medicare?

92% YES 5% No and 3% Undecided

3. Bulk Billing – Does your local doctor bulk bill?

34.6% YES – **58.2% NO** – 7.2% Don't know

4. Which level of Government do you want to have in charge of our hospitals?

41% Federal – 20% State – 24% Local – 15% Undecided

5. Should the University of New England have a medical faculty and other allied health services faculty to train and retain doctors and allied health service professionals in the country?

91.5% YES – 4.25% No – 4.25% Undecided

6. Would you be prepared to pay an increased Medicare Levy from 1.5% to 2% if this higher levy was used to increase bulk billing levels, extend payments for dental care and deliver more medical services?

81% Yes – 12.5% No – 6.5% Undecided