



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

MEDIA RELEASE

30 August 2004

Rail Freight Study shows opportunities exist

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has welcomed the release of the Rail Freight Preliminary Feasibility Study being undertaken by Mr Bob Charlston on behalf of Armidale Dumaresq Council, the Walcha Council and the New England North West Regional Development Board saying that it shows that opportunities do exist for the future.

“The Rail Freight Preliminary Feasibility Study is a focused look at what is happening on the existing rail line and what could be happening in the future on the rail line if it can be once again re-opened north of Armidale.

I believe that even though there are uncertainties relating to the new era of rail ownership and operation in NSW and Australia, there are potentially many opportunities to develop rail infrastructure as long as reliable freight access can be assured.

The announcement of Silverton Rail’s freight contract with Menlo International for 3 years gives a good basis to at least maintain the Armidale-Tamworth open.

I have known of and met with officials of Silverton Rail over a number of years now and know them to be a strong rail operator and very committed to regional rail freight services.

By attracting their operation onto this part of the line will no doubt provide them with a stepping stone to attracting other freight users to use rail as well,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes that once the Armidale-Tamworth section of the line is consolidated, it will make the case for re-opening the line further north easier to argue.

Mr Windsor further believes that issues such as the Ard Glen Tunnel (Murrurundi) upgrade and enhanced links to the Port of Newcastle would aid any public/private partnership arrangements or government funding for the re-opening of the line.

“With a committed rail freight service provider growing the market through their own commercial energy combines with a strong community push for the re-opening of the line north of Armidale, there will be a very strong case to put to Government – both State and Federal and to the private sector to get behind the project and overcome the current inertia in these sectors.

A transport hub developing in Glen Innes for north-south and east-west freight movements is very much up to the commitment of not only those who are currently enthusiastically supporting the project, but very much depends on the commitment of users of freight to use rail freight to meet their needs.

Mr Windsor said that one of the barriers that required attention are the issues between New South Wales and Queensland and the possibility of changes to incorporate the northern line under the new Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) Agreement.

“I can remember raising the issue of an across the border rail development with NSW Liberal Transport Minister, Bruce Baird in the Greiner Government (which closed the line) that had been recommended by the rail consultants Jacana Pty Ltd, to be told that NSW was not in the business of assisting Queensland.

Hopefully under the new ARTC arrangement, State boundaries will become less important.

I congratulate the Armidale-Dumaresq Council, Walcha Council and the New England North West Regional Development Board and the involvement of Member for Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay in commissioning this study and providing the community with a way forward on this important local infrastructure project,” Mr Windsor said.

For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02)6761 3080 or 042766 8868