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MEDIA RELEASE

6 October 2004

Windsor Wins Top MP Award

The Independent Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor, said today he was somewhat humbled but honoured to have been named as "Best MP" by voters' advocate, FairGO-Voterlobby.

Mr Windsor was recently named by FairGO as the most helpful Federal Member of Parliament in responding to a wide range of issues which had been forwarded by the organisation on behalf of concerned citizens to every MP in Australia during the last Parliamentary term.

Mr Windsor said it was very important that individuals in the community should have the right to be heard by their elected representatives in relation to issues of concern.

"I commend FairGO Director, Greg Bloomfield, for his ongoing efforts over many years to help bring the community's concerns to the attention of Parliamentarians across Australia," Mr Windsor said.

The following are transcripts of Media Releases issued by FairGO

Windsor Sets Political Benchmark - Wins Best MP

New England Independent MP, Tony Windsor set the benchmark for Federal Politicians in the term just ended. Independent unaffiliated voters' advocate, FairGO-Voterlobby helps voters put their issues before every MP to see who will help solve them. Some Federal MPs always do. That allows benchmarking of politicians to compare one against the other.

Since 2001, Mr. Windsor has outperformed every other Federal MP, many of whom have party machines behind them. Mr. Windsor has helped many voters who will never be able to reward him with a vote, according to FairGO director Mr. Greg Bloomfield, who said "In setting this Benchmark Mr. Windsor has shown selfless devotion to Parliamentary duty and the interests of all Australians. We applaud him and his effort."

Issues raised with MPs via FairGO (Est 1986) by Australian voters during this parliamentary term included Health services, Education in schools and universities, Nursing Home performance, Road Safety, The Iraq War, Disability funding, Immigration, Illegal Immigrants & Refugees, Capital city development and rural neglect, Rural services including mail, phone and drought assistance, greater Rural and Regional tax concessions, proper recognition of WWII Returned Service veterans, Parenting skills education, Free Trade Agreement and the impact of alcohol on under age drinkers, crime rates, anti-social behaviour and youth suicide.

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

Mr Windsor led runner up, Democrat Sen. Natasha Stott Despoja and third placed Liberal Sen Marise Payne by a substantial margin.

Others in the Top Ten Politicians, in descending order were Democrat Sen. Lyn Allison, Liberal Sen. Richard Alston, Green Sen. Kerry Nettle, Bradfield Liberal Education Minister Brendan Nelson, Democrat Sen. John Cherry, Pauline Hanson One Nation's Sen Len Harris and equal 10th Labor's Sen. Jan McLucas and Berowra Liberal Attorney General Philip Ruddock.

The most helpful political parties were First- Liberal, Second- Democrats and third Labor. They were followed in Fourth place by Greens and in Fifth place Nationals.

Other Federal MPs who assisted voters with replies, but less frequently were:-

ALP-

Sen. Kim Carr, Mr. Mark Latham, Werriwa, Sen. Jacinta Collins, Sen. George Campbell, Ms. Annette Ellis, Canberra, Mr. Martin Ferguson, Batman, Hon. Dr. Carmen Lawrence, Fremantle, Ms. Tanya Plibersek, Sydney and Wayne Swan, Lilley.

Liberal-

Mr. Bruce Bilson, Dunkley, Hon. Jackie Kelly, Lindsay, Hon. Tony Abbott, Warringah, Hon. Alan Cadman, Mitchell, Sen. Ross Lightfoot, Mr. David Hawker, Wannon, Mr. Michael Johnson, Ryan, Mr. Peter Lindsay, Herbert, Hon. Trish Worth, Adelaide, Ms. Julie Bishop, Curtin, Hon. Peter Costello, Higgins, Hon. John Howard, Bennelong and Andrew Southcott, Boothby.

Democrats-

Sen. Andrew Bartlett

Greens-

Sen. Bob Brown and Mr. Michael Organ, Cunningham

Nationals-

Hon. John Anderson, Gwydir

Progressive Alliance-

Sen. Meg Lees

Some politicians ignore voters

Mr. Bloomfield said that any Federal MP not listed above did not, according to FairGO's records, respond to voters working through it, on any of the issues listed above, appearing to judge them or the voters as unimportant enough to warrant a response to mail.

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Vote for Windsor a Win for Voters

There is much debate as to how effective Independents are in parliament. The answer seems to be "Very Effective" if Tony Windsor is any indication.

Windsor has set the Federal Parliamentary Benchmark for responding to voters. His record has eclipsed the efforts of other MPs by a country mile.

Voters from all over Australia have put their concerns to every MP and voters' advocate FairGO-Voterlobby has monitored who responded.

FairGO Director, Mr. Greg Bloomfield offered some comments on how an independent MP could outpace all other MPs by such a huge margin as Tony Windsor's.

"First and foremost an independent is responsible to the voters, not to any party pre-selection committee and so must perform well for voters to be re-elected. Secondly an Independent can raise any voter's concerns in parliament whether or not that offends party leaders on either side of the house. Thirdly, an Independent is not seeking promotion within a party and so can freely campaign for voters regardless of any party policy. Lastly, no government would be so silly as to reject a good idea or a good policy simply because it was suggested by an Independent so the Independent with good ideas for Australia has as much chance as anyone of getting them adopted."

Mr. Bloomfield went on to say "None of that means that an Independent will automatically perform well. There are brilliant performers and hopeless performers in Parliament and many shades in between, as in all walks of life. What it does mean is that when a high performer like Mr. Windsor takes office he has every opportunity to both influence policy and address to the concerns of voters. We are extremely grateful to Mr. Windsor for his outstanding responsiveness during this term. FairGO has no individual or party favourites. We simply believe that whoever is elected to Government should do what the voters want. Mr. Windsor has certainly advocated that during his term in Federal Parliament."

MEDIA RELEASE - Further information from Greg Bloomfield Phone 02 9988 3312 Politicians Benchmarked on Actual Past Performance

It is not what politicians promise before an election that counts, but how they actually perform when elected in dealing with voters' needs which change over time, according to one of Australia's largest broad-interest community lobbying organisations.

Since the last Federal election in 2001, the politically independent Community and Government Relations Consultant, FairGO-Voterlobby, has, on behalf of voters from around Australia, put a number of issues and requests before all Federal Members of Parliament. All MPs have had the same opportunity to respond, which enables them to be Benchmarked. Actual post-election performance has been judged.

Consistent with the 20/80 rule, only 20% of politicians responded. 80% failed to do so! Mr. Greg Bloomfield of Sydney, who founded FairGO in 1986 and is its National Director, says "20% is plenty to get the job done and voters' problems solved, because they influence others and all influence the Government and bureaucracy."

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Top Ten Federal Politicians, when it comes to responding to voters

1st Mr. Tony Windsor, Tamworth (Ind) - by a large margin

2nd Sen. Natasha Stott Despoja (AD)

3rd Sen. Marise Payne (Lib)

4th Sen Lyn Allison (AD)

5th Sen. Hon. Richard Alston (Lib)

6th Sen. Kerry Nettle (Grn)

7th Hon. Dr. Brendan Nelson, Bradfield (Lib)

8th Sen. John Cherry (AD)

9th Sen. Len Harris (PHON)

10th Sen. Jan McLucas (ALP) &

10th Hon. Philip Ruddock, Berowra (Lib)

Other Federal MPs who responded to voters, but less frequently were:-

ALP-

Sen. Kim Carr, Opposition Leader, Mr. Mark Latham, Werriwa, Sen. Jacinta Collins, Sen. George Campbell, Ms. Annette Ellis, Canberra, Mr. Martin Ferguson, Batman, Hon. Dr. Carmen Lawrence, Fremantle, Ms. Tanya Plibersek, Sydney and Wayne Swan, Lilley.

Liberal-

Mr. Bruce Bilson, Dunkley, Hon. Jackie Kelly, Lindsay, Hon. Tony Abbott, Warringah, Hon. Alan Cadman, Mitchell, Sen. Ross Lightfoot, Mr. David Hawker, Wannon, Mr. Michael Johnson, Ryan, Mr. Peter Lindsay, Herbert, Hon. Trish Worth, Adelaide, Ms. Julie Bishop, Curtin, Hon. Peter Costello, Higgins, Prime Minister, Hon. John Howard, Bennelong and Andrew Southcott, Boothby.

Democrats-

Sen. Andrew Bartlett

Greens-

Sen. Bob Brown and Mr. Michael Organ, Cunningham

Nationals-

Hon. John Anderson, Gwydir

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Progressive Alliance-

Sen. Meg Lees

Non-respondents Benchmarked at 0.

The 80% of MPs **NOT** listed in the 20% above, although elected and paid by voters, **did not**, according to FairGO's records, respond on any of the following important issues raised, as listed later. Mr. Bloomfield said "Perhaps they did not think that the voters or these issues were important enough."

Party Benchmarks (sum of the score of all MPs in the party, thus favouring larger parties, but also recognising that not all members of a party need to respond if one can solve the problem)

1st Liberal

2nd Democrats

3rd Labor

4th Greens

5th Nationals

ISSUES RAISED WITH ALL MPS ON WHICH BENCHMARKS ARE BASED

Health services - including nurse education, the doctors' dispute & mental health services.

Education - School & University funding

Nursing home accreditation and performance bonding

Road safety - including truck crashes

Iraq war

Importance of disability funding for children

Immigration - asylum seekers; illegal immigrants; Baxter detention centre

Capital city over-development

Rural services - neglected regional & rural communities; inadequate country mail & phone services; Regional and Rural Tax concessions to compensate for lack of facilities and services; Drought & drought assistance;

WWII returned service people seeking proper recognition

Parenting skills courses to help children grow into healthy, well adjusted young Australians free of abuse, loved and understood, educated with careers and free of criminal tendencies.

Australia/ US Free Trade Agreement, GATT, GM food

Alcohol sales to minors; alcohol fuelled youth crime, deaths and anti-social behaviour, road safety impact

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In announcing the benchmarking outcomes, Mr. Bloomfield urged "all voters, particularly those not aligned to any political party, to work with the Parliament as a whole towards building better government. Neither group can do it alone", he declared. Mr. Bloomfield said "bureaucrats are often to blame for undermining relationships between the politicians and voters by providing politicians, particularly opposition MPs, smaller parties and independents, with totally inadequate staffing to do their job properly. Business leaders", he said, "would not for a moment tolerate the inadequate staffing levels provided to Members of Parliament."

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