



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Windsor welcomes Minister Nelson's explanation & apology**

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has welcomed an explanation and apology he received from the Minister for Education the Hon Brendan Nelson in relation to the O'Connor Catholic College 'protocol' issue.

Mr Windsor, on entering Parliament House in Canberra on Monday received a phone call from Minister Nelson clarifying the situation.

This follows the directive from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education Pat Farmer MP's office last week that it was against 'protocol' for Mr Windsor to be asked by the school to open the new science laboratory despite the Minister or no other Government representative being available to perform the honour.

"Minister Nelson has quite rightly said that the school has the right to ask who it likes to open the facility.

Minister Nelson confirmed that the Government had no right to dictate to any community group the terms and conditions of community events such as the opening of the O'Connor Catholic College Science Laboratory.

I requested of Minister Nelson that he write to O'Connor Catholic College apologising for any embarrassment caused by the incident.

Minister Nelson has agreed to do so.

Minister Nelson informed me that he was not aware of the situation until late last Friday.

I am pleased to say that once Minister Nelson was aware of the predicament in which O'Connor Catholic College had been placed, he moved to redress the situation and I thank him for his intervention," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said that he was also made aware that the Departmental Liaison Officer who had given the original directive to O'Connor Catholic College no longer is in that position and has returned to the Department of Education in a 'non political' position.

"Apparently the Government has had a change of heart on this issue and I understand that the man who said that the Government could not find a suitable member to open the Science Laboratory, Pat Farmer MP is now going to attend.

I welcome Mr Farmer to the electorate and suggest that perhaps he may have a close look at other staff in his office who are obviously feeding him erroneous advice," Mr Windsor said.

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