



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Minister agrees

A Medical School in New England ‘a positive for rural health’

Hansard of Question without Notice

Mr Tony Windsor MP – Member for New England to the Minister for Health and Ageing – the Hon Tony Abbott MP 19th June 2006

Health: Rural Services

2.46 pm Windsor, Antony, MP New England IND (2.46 pm)—

My question is to the Minister for Health and Ageing and relates to the shortage of doctors in country Australia and recent discussions with the University of New England and the University of Newcastle with regard to the establishment of a medical school in New England. Given the success of the University of Newcastle's University Department of Rural Health, headquartered in Tamworth, and the New South Wales government's announcement today that they will fund teaching upgrades at the Tamworth and Armidale hospitals if the Commonwealth provides 80 places for medical students, will the minister inform the House of progress made in relation to those discussions on this crucial matter for country Australians?

ABBOTT, Hon. Tony John, Warringah Minister for Health and Ageing

I am happy to thank the member for New England for his question. This is a matter that is being brought to my attention not just by this question in this House but also by the member for Gwydir, who has made regular representations to me on this. I have also had some discussions on this with the Vice-Chancellor of the University of New England, the former head of the National Health and Medical Research Council. I think they have put in a good application. The government is certainly considering it. The information about the latest developments from the New South Wales government is interesting and constructive. I think that this is something that would be a positive for rural health.

I should point out in conclusion to the member for New England that the policies that the government has already put in place have, around Australia, if not necessarily in every rural community, produced an increase in the number of GPs of over 20 per cent since 1996.

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