



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

20 September 2006

Dental care needs more than temporary fillings

Petition calls for Medicare style levy for National Dental Health Scheme

The desperate need for significant improvements in dental health care is the subject of a petition being organised by Bendemeer residents Ruth and Charles Mathews.

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor is getting behind their petition and encouraging people of the New England to do likewise.

The petition to the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives "Draws the attention of the House to the inadequacy of Dental Health Care which can lead to life threatening diseases. Your petitioners therefore request the House that we, the undersigned, implore you to introduce a National Dental Health Scheme as a matter of urgency to be funded by a 1% levy of taxable income, this amount to be added to the Medicare levy."

Mr Windsor congratulated Mr and Mrs Mathews for their initiative and energy in starting this petition.

"Mr and Mrs Mathews have a long history of commitment to their community of Bendemeer and I congratulate and thank them for taking the initiative on the very important matter of dental health care particularly for country communities.

This important issue seems to be caught up in the State/Federal Government tennis match and it is only a huge community uprising that will bring about change.

The catalyst for change could very well be the petition started by Mr and Mrs Mathews," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said that there had been no additional commitments to dental care in the last two Health and Ageing Budgets with the last attention being paid to dental care in any way being in 2004.

"From July 1 2004, the Commonwealth provided funding for dental care under Medicare for patients with dental conditions which are exacerbating existing chronic condition and complex conditions with many other people in desperate need of dental care missing out," Mr Windsor said.

The issue of losing dentist numbers and training places for new dentists has also been raised by Mr Windsor again last week in the Parliament.

....2/

“Armidale dentist, Dr Chris Cole has been very active and vocal on raising the current dropping numbers of dentists and the grim future outlook for dentist numbers particularly in country areas.

I raised his concerns about the lack of training positions and put forward his suggested solutions to the Parliament last week.

Dr Cole suggested that we should

- Utilise the university staff in the theory and preclinical training
- Utilise the vast knowledge of the dentists in large regional areas such as Armidale, Albury, Dubbo, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Coffs Harbour etc for the practical clinical training of the undergraduates. This could be done as type of “intern” situation where the undergraduate students would be rostered to one of these regional areas and work under the supervision of the private practitioner on the non urgent Public Patient waiting lists. This is what happens in the major teaching hospital where the undergraduates do the fillings etc on the public patients under supervision.

This would allow for:

- More students to be enrolled in the Faculty of Dentistry.
- Utilisation of undergraduates to help alleviate the growing backlog of public patients on the public lists.
- Expose more undergraduates to country areas of NSW and to the real workings of general practice. This also gives them more clinical time in which they can learn their profession
- Give local practitioners a closer connection with ongoing education activities. One of the greatest problems of country practice is the mentoring with fellow colleagues and this set up would give the country Dentists more exposure to education with the added stimulation of this expansion of the profession.
- As a side outcome I feel a lot of the country Dentists may get a little extra lease of their professional life because of this interaction and potentially stay longer in the profession.

This can't be a bad thing for the economy because it keeps the workforce there and they also would be adding to their retirement security with added superannuation savings.

“I'm pleased to have people in the New England electorate who are not only offering solutions to the dental health care problem but people who are also prepared to be active in the community.

I look forward to a positive outcome for our dental services and encourage the people of the New England electorate to get behind these actions too,” Mr Windsor said.

Attached Photo

Mrs Ruth Mathews and her dental care petition with Tony Windsor MP Member for New England

