



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Windsor welcomes Liberals support for UNE Dental School

Support for the establishment of a Dental school at the University of New England by the Liberal Party has been welcomed by the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor.

“A Dental school at the University of New England is a high priority for not only the local communities of the New England but also important for training dentists to take up positions in other country communities so it is pleasing the Liberal Party is now indicating its support.

A Dental school at the UNE has been promoted now for a number of years with the Vision New England Summit in 2005 unanimously supporting its establishment championed by Armidale dentist Dr Michael Jonas and further pushed by another Armidale dentist Dr Chris Cole since then.

They, and all other delegates at the Summit to which the Liberal Party was invited but did not attend, saw the great need and value of having a Dental school at the UNE,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said since the Summit, a number of discussions had been held planting seeds and encouraging the development of a dental school at the UNE.

“Last year, I had preliminary discussions with the University of Sydney Vice Chancellor Gavin Brown about the possibility of his University’s dental program being run through the University of New England in a similar manner to the arrangement with Newcastle University Department of Rural Health and the UNE.

Since then, discussions have been held between the UNE Vice Chancellor Prof Alan Pettigrew and Prof Brown which appear to be very positive.

I congratulate the UNE and University of Sydney on their collaboration to address what is emerging as a major shortage of dentists across Australia,” Mr Windsor said.

Whilst Mr Windsor welcomes the Liberal Party support for the concept, he believes the Liberal Party and the National Party have no credibility with regard to dental health having shut down the Commonwealth Dental Scheme in 1997.

“The Liberal Party and National Party have refused to recognise dental health as part of bodily health under the Medicare arrangements, doing nothing about rural dental training for over a decade.

With 600,000 people on the waiting list for public dental health work, the Coalition partners now have to play catch-up instead of having planned for the future and implemented action that would have seen dental services keeping up with demand rather than having to now swing into crisis management to fix a crisis of their own making,” Mr Windsor said.

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