



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

26 October 2007

Abbott's policy tainted by Black and White contradictions

Aboriginal Medical Centre meeting unites for a future

With the Federal Government promoting the re-introduction of local boards to run local hospitals, the situation at the Pat Dixon Aboriginal Medical Centre in Armidale appears to be reflecting the opposite according to the Independent Member for England Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor convened a meeting of Aboriginal community representatives in Armidale on Thursday to discuss the future of the Pat Dixon Centre following a review of the governance and service provisions from the Centre which has threatened cuts to funding of services at the Centre.

As a result of the meeting, Mr Windsor will now seek a meeting with Commonwealth Department of Health officials to progress the issues raised at the meeting to ensure the future of the Pat Dixon Centre.

“The Aboriginal representatives at the meeting were united in the need to keep the Pat Dixon Aboriginal Medical Centre going and addressing the needs of the Aboriginal community in Armidale.

I was very pleased that this unity of purpose was achieved and I will be now seeking a meeting with Commonwealth Department of Health officials responsible for the funding of services to put the case for the need to have the Centre continue in its role in improving the health of Aboriginal people in the region – something that the Government is keen to progress elsewhere but perhaps is not as committed to in what may be seen as more mainstream communities like Armidale.

I have no doubt now that even though there may have been some differences in the past between various stakeholders, there is a strong resolve to maintain the Centre into the future.

The differences that arise from time to time are cultural and will always be there to a certain degree but on issues like this ‘we are all from the same mob’ was a quote that I think encapsulated the meeting’s feelings.

There has never been any criticism of the financial management of the Centre.

Comments about accountability by the National Party candidate for New England are ill informed and not helpful to resolving the issue,” Mr Windsor said.

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Mr Windsor said that Government was sending mixed messages in relation to the delivery of medical services.

“The Minister for Health Tony Abbott is running around Australia arguing that community based health boards should run their own health services and operate their own budgets but when it comes to Aboriginal health services the complete opposite is the recommendation from his Department,” Mr Windsor said.

The current approved model of governance for Aboriginal Medical Centres is “It essentially requires that ownership and management of the health agency is vested in the local indigenous community.”

The recommendation of the consultant is that “this current model of governance be replaced with a model that is based entirely upon skill level and experience required for primary health care service delivery to the Armidale Aboriginal Community and is independent of the community historical and factional issues.”

Mr Windsor said that the review also questioned the funding going to an Aboriginal Medical Centre that also serviced NON-Indigenous Australians and run by the local Aboriginal community.

“I thought reconciliation was supposed to be part of the Government’s agenda.

This is an ideal example of practical reconciliation but now the consultant is critical of it and recommending it now becomes as an objective to remove it.

Surely there should be one set of objectives for everyone,” Mr Windsor said.