



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

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Windsor asks PM and Ag Minister to delay changes to export wheat marketing

A request to delay the introduction of new export wheat marketing arrangements has been made to the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke by the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor has written to both the Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister respectfully suggesting that in view of the time scale required to achieve the changes proposed by the Government, that the current arrangements are maintained for the coming wheat season.

In his letter, Mr Windsor said, "Whilst I am at variance with the Government's view on this issue, I accept that it is the right of the Government to make such changes however I would like to draw attention to some real problems if the changes are rushed without proper process being in place on the ground.

Mr Windsor points out that "Climatic conditions across Australia's wheat belt have improved dramatically as has the price for internationally traded grain.

"With these two favourable factors there is the first chance for some years for wheatgrowers to retrieve some of their financial losses of recent years.

"To achieve that goal there needs to be certainty in terms of marketing arrangements.

"Decisions are being made now at the farm level without any certainty at the export marketing level."

Mr Windsor believes that delaying the introduction of new export wheat marketing arrangements would be of value to the government in terms of getting the process right as well as delivering certainty to wheatgrowers for the coming season.

Mr Windsor is at variance with the Government on this issue having undertaken a poll of wheat growers across Australia that indicated that 82% of them supported a single desk structure for the Marketing of Australia's bulk export wheat.

Mr Windsor is concerned that politics may be clouding the Government's decision to proceed hastily down the deregulation path to drive a wedge between the Liberal and National Parties over the issue.

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For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02) 6761 3080 or 0427 66 8868

“There were differences of opinion between the National Party and Liberal Party about the future marketing of Australia’s export wheat when they sat on the Government benches last year.

“The new Government’s position is virtually that of the Liberal Party’s Wilson Tuckey and by the Government rushing to introduce it for this season the only outcome will be a split in the Coalition parties at the expense of the wheatgrowers – the ones who have been doing it the toughest.

“With Senate numbers as they currently are, the passage of any legislation through the Senate prior to July 1 could be doubtful and will only further add to wheatgrowers’ uncertainty.

“I find it extraordinary how the Government exalts itself in winning an election on the basis that ‘collectivism’ in terms of workplace arrangements was a key plank of their philosophy when the opposite applies to wheatgrowers who have demonstrated in every poll conducted that they want a ‘collective’ arrangement for the marketing of their export wheat.

“I again ask the Prime Minister and the Minister for Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry to at least delay the introduction of the new arrangements so that wheatgrowers can have a degree of certainty for this season and the Government can refine their position and protocols for the future marketing of Australia’s export wheat and get it right regardless of the politics of the process.

“If the Government intends to make a “wrong” decision at least they could get the timing right,” Mr Windsor said.