



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](mailto:Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au)  
**Web Page:** [www.tonywindsor.com.au](http://www.tonywindsor.com.au)

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Windsor looks closely at changes to dental health programs**

Changes to dental health programs need to be closely watched come budget time according to the Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor is particularly concerned at how those who previously came under the Medicare funded program for people with other chronic conditions who need dental work to maintain their health needs will be treated by the new Government programs.

“The Government has announced earlier this month that people previously able to access dental work up to the value of \$2,125 per year for two years under Medicare because of another chronic illness that is adversely affected by poor dental condition will cease on June 30 however if people have not started their treatment by March 30, they will miss out completely.

Currently the Government has not announced anything to replace this specific program which helps those in dire need of dental work so that they can have a reasonable quality of life and for some, to just stay alive. Something needs to be put in place for these very vulnerable people or continue with this program.

Whilst I was highly critical of access requirements to this previous Government program, the Commonwealth Dental Scheme that has been announced by the current Government, which will top up State Government public dental programs but not provide those in need with the same level of support to fix their dental problems, will only exacerbate their chronic health problem,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor also questions the dental health program for teenagers recently announced by the Government.

“A new dental program that the Government has announced is the Teen-Dental Program which provides \$150 for a teen to visit a dentist to diagnose the state of their teeth but will not fund further treatment of the conditions discovered.

Unless there is some extra funding for work to be undertaken to fix the problems identified, the problem will continue to exist and affect the teenager,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor has previously asked people of his New England Electorate about their attitude to paying a higher Medicare Levy if dental treatment was to be added to the rebate list and received a positive response.

“81% of respondents to a Health Services survey I did in 2004 indicated that they would be prepared to pay a higher Medicare Levy if dental work was included in the list of services eligible for rebate under Medicare and I believe this still to be the case.

The Government has indicated that there are more announcements to come and I trust that they will fill these gaping holes,” Mr Windsor said.

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