



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## Media Release

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# Dental Medicare has teeth in New England

A proposal to introduce a Medicare scheme for dental work has the support of the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor and unless people across the New England electorate have changed their views recently, they too would support an increase in the Medicare levy to cover the cost.

A survey of the New England electorate conducted by Mr Windsor in mid 2004 showed strong support for the inclusion of dental work under Medicare and according to Mr Windsor is still indicative of the importance that people place on the role of dental health in the overall wellbeing of an individual.

**The question Mr Windsor asked in his survey was, “Would you be prepared to pay an increased Medicare Levy from 1.5% to 2% if this higher levy was used to increase bulk billing levels, extend payments for dental care and deliver more medical services?”**

**Of the 8,380 people who responded, 81% Yes – 12.5% No – 6.5% Undecided**

In 2006, a petition organised by Bendemeer residents Ruth and Charles Mathews saw thousands of people sign to support the introduction of a 1% levy to pay for a National Dental Health Scheme and the efforts of Armidale dentist, Dr Chris Cole in pushing for a “Denticare” scheme to be introduced should also be recognised.

Mr Windsor believes that dental health cannot be separated from overall bodily health.

“If you can’t eat properly because of your dental problems, this means you may not be able to get the nutritional needs to be healthy and therefore the flow on costs to the Medicare system can be increased as a result.

Increasing levies or taxes is always a risk for a Government but I think from the positive response to the survey and petition, increasing the Medicare levy if the higher levy was used to extend payments for dental care would be met by most in the community as something they could do to improve our health system.

So I call on the Government to show some wisdom and give the dental health system some better bite,” Mr Windsor said.

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