



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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New health structures need careful consideration

The so-called “local” and “regional” health board structures being proposed by the Liberal and Labor Parties needs more scrutiny as to the long term impact rather than the populist approach that both are taking according to the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor.

Mr Windsor said that the relationship that has developed between Armidale, the UNE, Tamworth, Taree and Newcastle University of Hunter New England Health in relation to the Medical School at the UNE and other health issues should not be just brushed aside under the political guise that localism will necessarily be better.

“We have to be very careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater when we look at the revamping of our health structures.

“We really must look at where things are working with people working well together.

“There is a strong feeling among the medical professionals in the New England area that the current structure, whilst not perfect, is making good progress.

“These medical professionals are very complementary about the openness and positive communication that is occurring within the Hunter New England Area Health Service with the majority wanting to keep the current structure so that wholesale changes don’t put the service back in its delivery.

“In this case, the cliché ‘If it ain’t broke don’t fix it’ may well be very true and I would urge a very careful consideration of the current structure of the Hunter New England Area Health Service continuing before making any changes,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor is excited about the impact of the National Broadband Network rollout on health service delivery.

“The National Broadband Network rollout is going to be critical for real time e-health service delivery for regional and remote communities into the future.

“The NBN will bring country people closer to specialist services both in terms of distance and time.

“This will further breakdown barriers to attracting and keeping people in country Australia,” Mr Windsor said.

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Mr Windsor is also positive about the development of other health services in the region pointing to a number of advances in the region and some in need of further attention.

“The UNE Medical School in conjunction with the University of Newcastle is a great achievement that was first mentioned at the Vision New England Summit in 2003.

“Multi Purpose Health Services (MPS) continue to grow in number to service our smaller communities.

“We now have MPS’s in Emmaville, Guyra, Walcha, Barraba, Bingara, Urbenville, Warialda, Boggabri and Bundarra with one under construction in Manilla and one recently announced for Werris Creek.

“The building of an Integrated Cancer Care Service in Tamworth and extended services in Armidale at a cost of \$42m will certainly enhance the chances of recovery of those people in our communities who unfortunately have to battle this disease.

“Mental Health services particularly in regional Australia have struggled to attract qualified people to provide the service – a fact that has exacerbated the delivery of this important service.

“Dental Health continues to need reform and I support the Denticare proposal which would see many dental services covered under Medicare.

“Aged care services need an increase in funding to be able to pay the staff of these facilities a better wage to assist in attracting more people into this sector.

“Health issues are and always will be THE major election issue as advances are made in medical science and demand to access services increases.

“However, I am positive about the future of our health service delivery and look forward to working with the medical professionals and the broader community to ensure the New England Electorate keeps pace with the demand being placed on it,” Mr Windsor said.