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**FAXED**

**Mr Alistair Sands  
Secretary  
Finance and Public Administration  
Australian Senate  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600**

**Dear Mr Sands**

**Re: Submission To Senate Inquiry Regional Partnerships Program**

I, Helen Laurie Tickle am the Chief Executive Officer of the Small Business Centre New England and North West, a self funding organization providing training, conference facilities, business and advisory services to the business and wider community.

I am a past president of the Tamworth and District Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2003), one of the largest Chambers in country New South Wales and am a past Board Member of Tourism Tamworth.

I have also been a vice-president of the New South Wales Division of Business and Professional Women and am currently the President of the Tamworth Serendipity Committee (Breast Cancer) and am a member of the Tamworth Friends of the Visually Impaired.

In August 2004 I was a recipient of a National Platinum Award from Tourism Training Australia for leadership and contribution to Industry.

*In an honorary capacity, I am the Campaign Secretary for Federal Member of Parliament Tony Windsor, who is the Federal Member for the electorate of New England. My duties as Campaign Secretary include helping to co-ordinate the campaign, including advertising and campaign strategies, managing Tony's campaign office, organizing supporters to assist at polling booths on election day and organizing functions for supporters of Tony. I do not receive any financial reward or payment for acting as Mr Windsor's Campaign Secretary. I have performed this role since April 1991, when Mr Windsor was a candidate for NSW State Parliament for the first time.*

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2. I verify that on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2004 at 10.30 am I attended a meeting at the Powerhouse Motorcycle Museum with Greg MacGuire, Tony Windsor and Stephen Hall. I have known Greg MACGUIRE for about 17 years.

3. I have previously been associated with the National Party in the capacity of member from 1984 until 1991. I was the Secretary of the Gunnedah Branch between 1985 and 1986. I have known John ANDERSON and Sandy MACDONALD for 20 years from my association with the National Party, and I see them from time to time in the local area and at functions.

4. At the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2004 Greg MacGuire said that he wanted to get us together to discuss the meeting held the previous week between himself, John Anderson and Sandy MacDonald regarding the Equine Centre funding. Discussions took place regarding the strategies and 'conditions' attached to the proposed announcement. Tony was advised to take a back seat regarding the Equine Centre – the Nationals want the kudos.

5. At the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> May, Greg also stated that the Nationals were worried about losing another seat and that they would 'love to get New England back'. They have always been very upset about this being an Independent Seat and were amazed that they lost the State seat to an Independent. At this point in the conversation Greg then relayed that they would offer you anything. A diplomatic posting, or anything to stand aside.

6. I didn't really think much of this offer because Tony has received offers in relation to joining up with established political parties before. I am not aware of any past offers being made in relation to diplomatic postings.

7. The meeting finished at approximately 11.30 am or a bit later and I drove back to my workplace in my own car.

8. I had not had any further conversations with any person, including Tony Windsor, Stephen Hall or Greg MacGuire, in relation to the conversation detailed above since the day of the meeting until my interview with the Federal Police on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004. Since making my Statement to the Federal Police I have made no public comment on the matter and have not discussed the meeting with anyone. This is my first statement since the one made to the Federal Police on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2004.



Helen Tickle  
27<sup>th</sup> January 2005