

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TONY WINDSOR MP
INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

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Senate Inquiry Submission

28th January 2005

Committee Secretary
Senate Finance & Public Administrative Committee
Department of Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

RE: Submission to Senate Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships Program and Sustainable Regions Program

I Antony Harold Curties Windsor residing at "Cintra", Werris Creek NSW and currently the Federal Member for the Electorate of New England do present a submission to the Australian Senate Finance and Public Administration Reference Committees Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships Program.

I believe that the submission concurs with the Terms of Reference of the Inquiry and relates directly to:

- (1) The administration of the Regional Partnerships program and the Sustainable Regions program, with particular reference to the process by which projects are proposed, considered and approved for funding, including:
 - (a) decisions to fund or not to fund particular projects;
 - (b) the recommendations of area consultative committees;
 - (c) the recommendations of departmental officers and recommendations from any other sources including from other agencies or other levels of government;
 - (d) the nature and extent of the respective roles of the administering department, minister and parliamentary secretary, other ministers and parliamentary secretaries, other senators or members and their advisers and staff in the process of selection of successful applications;
 - (e) the criteria used to take the decision to fund projects;
 - (f) the transparency and accountability of the process and outcomes;
 - (g) the mechanism for authorising the funding of projects;
 - (h) the constitutionality, legality and propriety of any practices whereby any members of either House of Parliament are excluded from committees, boards or other bodies involved in the consideration of proposed projects, or coerced or threatened in an effort to prevent them from freely communicating with their constituents; and



For further information contact Tony Windsor - 0427 668868

- (i) whether the operation of the program is consistent with the Auditor-General's 'Better Practice Guide for the Administration of Grants', and is subject to sufficient independent audit.
- (2) With respect to the future administration of similar programs, any safeguards or guidelines which might be put in place to ensure proper accountability for the expenditure of public money, particularly the appropriate arrangements for independent audit of the funding of projects.
- (3) Any related matters.

My submission relates to 3 areas of interest within the Electorate of New England where the Commonwealth Government has been involved in the funding of projects.

Those projects are:

1. The Australian Equine and Livestock Centre (AELC) \$6M
2. The University New England Maths and Science Centre \$4.95M
3. The Grace Munro Aged Care Facility at Bundarra.

I stress however that all of these projects are very worthy recipients of Federal Government funding with many people working very hard over a very long period of time to achieve the result for their communities.

It is the politicisation of the process and political conditions placed on funding that I believe needs investigation by the Senate Inquiry.

This is admitted to by Senator Sandy Macdonald in his media statement on August 10 2004 in relation to the University of New England Maths & Science Centre, wherein he states "Advertising relating to the part the Nationals played in securing funding for the UNE's new Maths and Science centre is all part of the campaign to make New England matter. Mr Windsor's advertising complaint only serves to further illustrate that it is only when you have a representative in Government that you can achieve and deliver funding and better outcomes for the electorate of New England."

If this is indeed the case, why advertise a process to access funding? How many well intentioned, well researched and worthy projects have been rejected because of political interference in the process?

Australian Equine & Livestock Centre (AELC)

The Senate Committee would be well aware of the allegations that were made by me recorded on Parliamentary Hansard relating to the offer of an inducement to not stand as a candidate at the 2004 Election (Refer to Hansard and other information submitted for Committee's information).

The submission details

- 1 The political conditions placed on funding approval regarding my position on the Australian Equine & Livestock Centre Board
- 2 The inducement offer made to me to not stand for re-election

The submission also outlines events and conversations that occurred relating to those allegations and political preconditions that were applied to the funding application for the Equine Centre and the political conditions regarding membership of the Equine Centre Board.

The Equine Centre is a project that I had a close personal involvement with over many years and was instrumental in obtaining NSW Government funding of \$3.35 million when the State Member for Tamworth.

For further information contact Tony Windsor - 0427 668868

It was common knowledge that whilst the then State Member was an Independent and more recently the Federal Member, that Federal funding would not flow for this project whilst I maintained a close involvement.

I would argue that the political conditions that were placed on the first application for funding under the Chairmanship of Mr Peter Botfield were put in place to find reasons to not proceed with the project (pre May 2002) whilst the second application, not being substantially different to the first, the political preconditions were about making the project happen with the appropriate political rewards by the removal of the local Member, either from active involvement in the process or preferably from politics altogether.

The Australian Equine and Livestock Centre is an excellent project and would withstand any scrutiny in terms of viability. The project has enormous potential for growth at local, national and international levels.

A hard copy has been mailed to the Committee which includes media reports and other documents to support my submission to the Inquiry.

UNE National Centre for Maths & Science

The funding of \$4.95 million from the Regional Partnerships Program to the National Centre for Maths & Science at the University of New England is another example which was investigated by the University of New England Council and found to be at fault in the politicisation of the funding for the University by the National Party.

A hard copy of the evidence including copies of emails, media releases and newspaper stories has been sent for inclusion in my submission to the Inquiry.

The Grace Munro Aged Care Facility – Bundarra

Regional Partnerships funding was contributed to a unique aged care facility in the small town of Bundarra. It had eleven sources of funding with the community uniting behind the development over a long period of time to bring it to fruition.

Included in my hard copy submission is a Statutory Declaration from the Uralla Shire Council General Manager explaining the happenings in the lead up to the opening of the Centre, Inverell Times newspaper stories including their Freedom of Information discoveries and Hansard.

Concluding remarks

The political preconditions placed on myself in relation to the Equine Centre, on some of the University of New England staff relating to the Maths & Science Centre and the pressuring of a Local Government Authority in relation to the Grace Munro Centre at Bundarra I believe is evidence of a pattern of behaviour that when combined with other submissions from other electorates will clearly show that there has been undue political interference in the processes surrounding the Regional Partnerships Program.

Thank you for the opportunity of making this submission. I look forward to attending the hearings of the Committee and answering questions that the Committee may ask in clarification of my submission.

Yours sincerely

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

For further information contact Tony Windsor - 0427 668868

Political conditions placed on AELC Board Membership

The announcement of the inaugural Board of the National Equine and Livestock Centre was carried out by the Premier of NSW, the Hon Bob Carr MP on 20 April 2004.

The Board was made up of major horse industry representatives, business people, Tamworth Regional Council, community representatives and State and Federal Members of Parliament and was as follows:

Mr Greg Maguire, Chairman
Mrs Gail Ritchie, National Cutting Horse Association
Mr Hunter Jones, Australian Quarter Horse Association
Mrs Rosemary Harmer, Australian Bushman's Campdraft & Rodeo Association
Mr Scott Higginbotham, local businessman, horse enthusiast
Mr Terry Keating, local businessman
Mr Dick Cameron, Stock & Station Agents Association
Clr James Treloar, Mayor, Tamworth Regional Council
Mr Paul Anderson, Tamworth Regional Council
Mr Ray Tait, community representative
Mr Peter Draper MP, State Member for Tamworth
Mr Tony Windsor, Member for New England

Contrary to a view presented by some of the media, I did not resign from that Board.

The last Board meeting I attended was on July 30.

I was informed by Greg Maguire in a subsequent conversation that Mr Anderson went feral when he discovered I was still involved in the process having previously raised concerns at their May meeting.

According to Greg Maguire he informed John Anderson that I was no longer on the Board.

Greg Maguire then told me, "Mate, I had to remove you". My 'removal' was part of the political preconditions that were being applied to the funding submission.

For further information contact Tony Windsor - 0427 668868

The offer of inducement to not stand for re-election

The following is an overview of events and conversations relating to the offer of an inducement for me not to stand for re-election for the seat of New England. A more detailed account is included in my hard copy submission.

19 May 2004

A meeting took place with Greg Maguire, Stephen Hall, Helen Tickle and myself, Tony Windsor, at the Boardroom of the Powerhouse Hotel in Tamworth. (See attached Hansard record in my hard copy submission)

16 September 2004

I had discussions by phone with journalist Tony Vermeer (Sunday Telegraph) regarding the possibility of a hung Parliament and any offers or demands that had been made. Eg. had I been offered the position of Speaker.

I mentioned a number of propositions that have been put to me over the years of my political involvement including the most recent of an intermediary offering an inducement to not stand for the 2004 Federal Election on behalf of two political players.

19 September 2004

Sunday Telegraph article and radio interviews relating to the truth of the article.

20 September 2004

- ALP announces that it will refer allegations of an inducement to Tony Windsor to the Australian Electoral Commission for possible investigation.
- My wife Lyn Windsor and I drive back from Dubbo to Werris Creek after Tony McGrane MP's funeral and field a number of media phone calls requesting the names of those who offered the inducement. I refused to name names and said I viewed it as an act of stupidity and desperation at the time and that I did not intend naming people.
- Subsequently when informed by journalists that such an offer could be a criminal offence under the Australian Electoral Act and could be investigated by the Australian Federal Police, I stated that if obliged under the law to name the names, that I would do so.
- Stephen Hall rang me that night to say that Greg Maguire had rung him and abused him. Greg Maguire said to Stephen Hall that I had told the media that I had been approached by an intermediary and he was upset that he thought I would be informing the press of who the people were that were involved in the inducement offer.
- Stephen Hall rang me and suggested that I ring Greg Maguire and speak with him about any statement that I had made to the press.
- Greg Maguire had left a message on my phone also. I rang Greg Maguire at his home. His partner Twiggy answered and said that Greg Maguire did not want to talk to me.

For further information contact Tony Windsor - 0427 668868

- I suggested that he should and he eventually came to the phone and was quite abusive and distressed and said he would be resigning as the Chairman of the Equine Centre Board.
- I explained the position of the interview with Tony Vermeer of the Sunday Telegraph and said that the "offer" was as part of various offers made to me over the years in politics and that I had no intention of naming the names as I saw the offer as an act of stupidity. The conversation did not last long.
- Greg Maguire informed me that if ever questioned on the issue he would lie to protect the Deputy Prime Minister and the Equine Centre funding.

21 September 2004

James Treloar, Mayor of Tamworth Regional Council rang me on my mobile phone and said he had been speaking to Greg Maguire who was very distressed and was threatening to resign as Chairman of the Equine Centre over the issue of an inducement being offered to me that had been aired in the media the day before. (No names were mentioned until November 17, 2004)

(\$6million funding announced for Equine Centre mid morning by Deputy Prime Minister, Senator Sandy Macdonald, Greg Maguire, James Treloar)

I understand that Stephen Hall and Greg Maguire met during the day and a message was relayed to me, apparently from the Deputy Prime Minister, John Anderson suggesting "Tell your mate Windsor to back off, this is bigger than both of us" (or words to that effect). Stephen Hall also said that Greg Maguire told him he would lie and not bring the Deputy Prime Minister down.

23 September 2004

Stephen Hall and I met with Greg Maguire at Greg's office in the Powerhouse Motorcycle Museum.

Greg Maguire repeated that if interviewed he would lie. "I will not bring down the Deputy Prime Minister of this country".

Greg Maguire also made the point that he would protect the Equine Centre funding.

Discussion took place about getting the National Party people in the Electorate to stop calling for the names. Greg Maguire said he would make the appropriate call to John Anderson.

September 27, 2004

Australian Federal Police interviewed me in my electorate office in Tamworth

October 1, 2004

Australian Federal Police interview me in Armidale

October 9, 2004

Election Day

November 17, 2004

Parliamentary speech naming the names

For further information contact Tony Windsor - 0427 668868

Submission

to

**the Senate Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships
Program**

from

**Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England**

**National Centre for Mathematics, Information Technology
and Science Teaching at the University of New England
Armidale NSW.**

\$4.95 Million



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26th January 2005

Committee Secretary
Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Regional Partnerships Program funding for the National Centre for Mathematics, Information Technology and Science Teaching at the University of New England.

Please find attached my submission to the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee for their Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships Program and Sustainable Regions Program regarding the above project funding.

The submission includes copies of media releases, newspaper articles, full page advertorial advertisements and website printouts dated 29th November 2004 and 24th January 2005 and emails to and from the University of New England.

I would like to state at the outset that I was and still am very much supportive of the UNE National Centre for Mathematics, Information Technology and Science Teaching. Support for the Centre was also gained from across the electorate of New England at the Vision New England Summit I convened in October 2003 with over 60 community groups endorsing its establishment, however I have real concerns about the politicisation of the funding process and the possible ramifications for other worthy projects in the future.

A media release dated 11th August 2004 from the University of New England, Chancellor, Mr John Cassidy states in point 2 that a breach of University protocol was committed 'unintentionally' and procedures have been reinforced to ensure that the University's integrity and reputation for political neutrality is never compromised.

Point 3 also indicates that the advertisement placed in those papers was meant to be a way of thanking the "Federal Government".

An issue associated with funding of another \$3.5m for the University of New England at approximately the same time as the announcement of the Maths and Science Centre announced by the Minister for Education, the Hon Brendan Nelson was 'hushed' up for reasons I am unable to fathom. Surely such distribution of public funds to a University rightly deserved acknowledgement and thanks as I did in my media release on July 27, 2004 and drew an urgent email from the UNE Vice Chancellor saying "... Special treatment by Government is not something we want to broadcast or discuss in public...."

The letter from the Minister does not indicate any 'special treatment' from the Minister that should not be recognised in the public domain and I was very grateful that the Minister had seen fit to recognise the UNE for the changes to budget management and recovering from serious financial difficulty and at the same time maintaining a broad disciplinary base.

This project was funded through the Regional Partnerships Program access to which is normally via a submission to the local Area Consultative Committee and progressed with a recommendation from the local Area Consultative Committee to in this case the Orange Office of Dotars and then onto the Minister's office.

In this instance, there does not appear to be any mention of the involvement of the New England North West Area Consultative Committee and yet it was mentioned on their website when viewed on November 29 2004, yet is not on the same website when viewed again on January 24, 2005.

I therefore draw the funding of the National Centre for Science, Information Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia to the attention of the Senate Committee Inquiry under the terms of reference

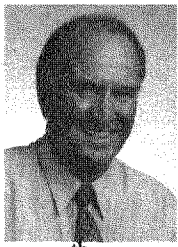
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- (d) the nature and extent of the respective roles of the administering department, minister and parliamentary secretary, other ministers and parliamentary secretaries, other senators or members and their advisers and staff in the process of selection of successful applications;
- (e) the criteria used to take the decision to fund projects;
- (f) the transparency and accountability of the process and outcomes;
- (g) the mechanism for authorising the funding of projects;

As a follow up to my submission I would also seek the opportunity of appearing before the Senate Inquiry Committee at a mutually convenient time to make a verbal statement to the Committee and answer any questions arising.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Windsor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England



TONY WINDSOR B.Ec. MP
INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND



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Summary

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Those projects are:

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I stress however that all of these projects are very worthy recipients of Federal Government funding with many people working very hard over a very long period of time to achieve the result for their communities.

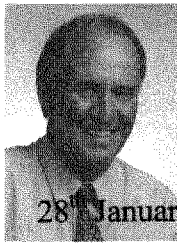
It is the politicisation of the process that I believe needs the investigation of the Senate Inquiry and I look forward to attending the hearings of the Committee and answering questions that the Committee may ask in clarification of my submission.

Thank you for the opportunity of making this submission.

Yours sincerely



Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England



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28 January 2005

PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
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Committee Secretary
 Senate Finance & Public Administrative Committee
 Department of Senate
 Parliament House
 Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir

RE Grace Munro Centre Bundarra – NSW

Background

The Grace Munro Centre at Bundarra is an aged care facility which has been funded through a number of sources but strongly led by the Uralla Shire Council and local community leaders.

Council Loan Funds	\$500,000
Minister for Ageing Grant	140,000
Regional Solutions Grant	100,000
Dept of Ageing, Disability & Home Care	34,060
Dept of Veterans' Affairs	33,000
Inverell District Legacy	10,000
Lions Club International	55,000
Community Fundraising	39,164

	\$911,224

I believe that the series of events leading to and following the Opening of the Grace Munro Aged Care Centre at Bundarra concur with the Senate Committee's Terms of Reference 1(L) and gets to the heart of our representational process and privileges of the Member.

- The documents enclosed particularly those presented in the form of a Statutory Declaration by the General Manager of Uralla Shire Council, Robert Fulcher, demonstrate the political pressure and bullying by Senator Sandy Macdonald to obtain political advantage.
 - The press clippings surrounding the opening and subsequent events clearly shows the deliberate attempt by Senator Macdonald to coerce and threaten a Council into removing the right of the duly elected Member for communicate with his constituents.
 - Senator Sandy Macdonald also misled the public and the press on a number of occasions.
1. **10 November 2005** Senator Macdonald's email asking that Mr Windsor's name be deleted from the plaque stating as a reason to the Inverell Times (December 17 2005) that he was under a lot of pressure at the time as Mr Windsor had named him in Parliament as part of an inducement offer not to stand at the next election.

Senator Macdonald also cited the same reason in The Australian (December 16 2005).

The question that needs to be asked is what was Senator Macdonald annoyed about on November 10 if he wasn't named until November 17?

If he had no knowledge of the "inducement issue" prior to his name being raised in Parliament on November 17, why was he so "upset" on November 10?

2. Senator Macdonald's misrepresentation of the Government's position by stating that it was the Government's position that the Local Member should not be part of an official function within his own Electorate. This is another example of a political condition being placed on a public body for political advantage.

I believe the behaviour of Senator Macdonald deserves closer scrutiny. His conduct is in stark contrast to the professional courtesies and advice extended to myself as the local member and Uralla Shire Council by the current Minister for Ageing, The Hon Julie Bishop, the former Minister the Hon Kevin Andrews, the former Minister for Regional Services, The Hon Wilson Tuckey and their Departmental staff who had carriage of funding arrangements. To them I extend a thank you on behalf of the people of Bundarra and Uralla Shire Council.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Windsor". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned centrally below the "Yours sincerely" text.

Tony Windsor MP
Member for New England

STATUTORY DECLARATION NSW OATHS ACT 1900

GRACE MUNRO CENTRE OPENING AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

I, **ROBERT GEORGE FULCHER**

of ...20 McCrossin Street, Uralla

in the State ofNew South Wales

do hereby solemnly declare and affirm that:-

This Statutory Declaration concerns dealings I had regarding the opening of the Grace Munro Centre.

1. By letter of 30 June 2004 (attached), I wrote a letter, on behalf of Council, to Mr Tony Windsor, MP asking him to invite either or both Minister Julie Bishop and/or the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr John Anderson, to carry out an official opening of the Grace Munro Centre, Bundarra.
2. This process was interrupted by the calling of the federal election.
3. By letter of 26 October 2004 (attached), I wrote again to Mr Windsor, after the election, asking him to ask the relevant Ministers whether they would be able to attend an official opening on 4 December 2004. A copy of that letter was sent to Senator Sandy Macdonald.
4. I then had a call from Senator Macdonald on either 28 or 29 October 2004. He made a number of comments concerning Council's decision to ask Mr Windsor to contact the Ministers concerning the official opening. Those comments included the following:
 - That the government was disappointed with the election result in the New England.
 - If the New England electors chose to return Mr Windsor, they will need to live with the consequences.
 - That the government was not pleased by the fact that Mr Windsor openly criticized them.
 - That Ministers of the government will not respond favourably to requests made to them by Mr Windsor.

(continued)

.....
JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Rob Fulcher
.....

NOTE: THE BACK OF THIS PAGE MUST ALSO BE SIGNED IN FULL.

- That if Council wished Ministers of the government to attend the official opening of the Centre, it will be necessary for Council to ask Senator Macdonald directly.
 - In response to my comments that Mr Windsor had been democratically elected as our local member and the correct protocol was to approach the government through the local member, Senator Macdonald said that that may be correct but what we were dealing with here was hard ball politics and political reality.
5. Having discussed this matter with the Mayor, who had also spoken to Senator Macdonald, it was agreed that I should write directly to Senator Macdonald asking him to invite the Ministers to attend the official opening. I did so by letter which was faxed on 29 October 2004 (copy attached).
 6. By letter dated 28 October 2004 (attached), Mr Windsor advised that he had written to the Minister for Ageing, the Minister for Transport and Regional Services and the Minister for Veteran Affairs inviting them to attend the official opening.
 7. By letter dated 4 November 2004 (attached), the Executive Assistant to the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to Tony Windsor advising that the Deputy Prime Minister would not be available to take part in the opening due to another commitment and that it would be appropriate for Senator Sandy Macdonald to participate on Mr Anderson's behalf.
 8. By email, sent on 9 November 2004 (attached), the office of the Hon. Julie Bishop, MP, Minister for Ageing, wrote to me advising her inability to attend and that she would like to invite Senator Sandy Macdonald to represent her at the opening of the facility.
 9. As a result, Council then dealt directly with Senator Macdonald and his office.
 10. Suggested wording for the official plaque for the opening was forwarded to Senator Macdonald's office on 10 November 2004. The wording suggested by Council included reference to Mr Tony Windsor (copy attached).

(continued)

And I make this solemn declaration, in accordance with the Oaths Act, 1900, and subject to the punishment by law provided for the making of any wilfully false statement in any such declaration.

Declared at Uralla.....)
 this 15th..... day of)
December.....2004.)
 before me:)

Ray Fisher.....

[Signature].....
 JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

MEGAN ELIZABETH CONE (932 1604)
 Print full name (and number) of JP