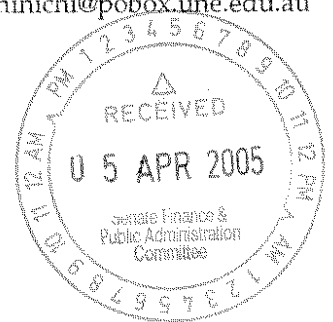


March 28, 2005

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



Dear Sir,

Re: Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships Program: Regional Partnerships funding for the National Centre for Science, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia at the University of New England

We, Professors Victor Minichiello and John Pegg, of the University of New England, in the state of NSW, do present a submission to the Australian Senate Finance and Public Administration Reference Committees Inquiry into the Regional Partnerships Program.

The submission arises from statements made by the Honourable Tony Windsor MP to various media outlets relating to the funding for the National Centre for Science, Information and Communication Technology and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia at the University of New England which could be broadly described as his 'cash for comment' allegations; and statements made by the Honourable Tony Windsor MP to this Inquiry about 'the political preconditions placed on some of the University of New England Staff relating to the Maths and Science Centre'.

At the heart of the comments made by the Honourable Tony Windsor is his claim that funding for the National Centre was conditional upon receiving favourable political comments and his comments imputed on both the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies, Professor Victor Minichiello, and the Director of the National Centre, Professor John Pegg, through media statements such as his press release of 5 August 2004, where he makes the comment about: 'gullible UNE staff who appear to have agreed to sign for their supper in this demeaning way'.

We strongly deny that funding for the establishment of this important national project was ever tied or dependent upon providing any such support for The Nationals.

Our comments reflect our genuine acknowledgement of the interest and support we have received from the Government and The Nationals for a project that we initiated to address a significant education and workforce planning concern and a social justice issue confronting rural Australians.

We are on public record for making these statements and we stand by them then and now.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Minichiello'.

Professor Victor Minichiello

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Pegg'.

Professor John Pegg