



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Windsor opposes full Telstra sale as Nationals prepare to rollover again

Independent Federal Member for New England, Tony Windsor is strongly opposed to the full sale of Telstra and believes the National Party is preparing to rollover on the issue.

Speaking on ABC Radio National, Mr Windsor said that comments by National Party Senator Ron Boswell that Telstra services were nearly up to scratch were incorrect.

“Senator Boswell obviously won’t be standing again – if he believes in what he’s been saying then he obviously won’t get the endorsement of the electorate.

I’d say they’re using Honest Ron in a position of not standing for endorsement again to promote something that Liberals want, that the Nationals well know, hasn’t been delivered and really can’t be delivered under any regulatory or legislative program,” Mr Windsor said.

What I suggest Ron Boswell do is next time he is in Gunnedah visiting his National Party leader, that he go for a little walk towards Tamworth, only about a kilometre and he’ll find Telstra cable still on a barbed wire fence, quite some hundreds of metres of it, and that’s all over regional Australia, it’s all over the remoter parts of Australia and I would have thought that the National Party’s view wasn’t just to look after the regional cities but to look after those people who are out there producing the exportable commodities that are in the smaller and more remote areas and they’re definitely not doing that.

Telstra has tried, there’s no doubt about that but they’re trying because there’s political imperative – there’s pressure on there to make the thing look good - to gloss it up for sale. As soon as you remove that political imperative the infrastructure will completely collapse.

Mr Windsor also has grave concerns about the ability of the Government to legislate to ensure that rural and regional services are protected to guarantee the right to updated technology.

Mr Windsor told Radio National “HIH was supposed to be protected through a legislative and prudential framework and it collapsed.

This trust us and everything will be right, there’ll be equity of access to services. We’re not talking about broadband technology and equity of access to those things. There are people who still don’t get an ordinary telephone with any sort of security,” Mr Windsor said.

“I know a business west of Bingara, in John Anderson’s electorate, that has kept complaining about the basic telephone service. They are trying to advertise in capital cities. They are trying to do exactly what

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all politicians are saying you can locate in country Australia, you can advertise on the internet but what's the good of advertising on the internet or the Newcastle Herald if people can't get through to you to accept your offer," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor was asked about the politics of the situation and whether the full sale is still rating highly in the electorate or perhaps the electorate are viewing the sale of Telstra as a foregone conclusion.

Mr Windsor replied "No, and this is where the Nationals have completely lost the plot. They're not listening to their constituency – they're listening to what the Liberals are telling them and they're going to use the salinity argument and a few green arguments to produce the cash. But if a poll was done, I'd say over 90% of country people wouldn't want Telstra removed from public ownership because of the suspicion and the reality that under any sort of structure that's put in place, those who are remote those who are small, those who have distance to contend with will be disadvantaged. History says that, Competition policy rules suggest that, economic rationalism says that, the reality of big business indicates that. Some sort of legislative and regulatory program isn't going to correct that. Ron Boswell knows that. They are using Ron.

When asked about the Senate position on this and his lobbying of non Government Senators, Mr Windsor said, "If the non Government Parties believe regional Australia deserves a fair go, they should oppose this because they will be voting against the long term future of regional Australia – against equity for regional Australia. I don't think city people want that.

Mr Windsor doesn't think it will get through the Senate but whether a few of them are bought off in terms of the environmental agenda, but he will be doing his level best to convince them not to support any sale of Telstra.