



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister drops out on 'cheap Telstra call' - Windsor

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has responded to comments made by Senator Richard Alston, the Minister for Communications and therefore the Minister responsible for ensuring a guaranteed high quality telecommunications service to country Australians.

"Senator Alston should know better than to fiddle the context of a radio interview for his own political purposes.

Senator Alston rightly states that the Federal Government can regulate a private owner of Telstra.

He also says the Government could apply new conditions if it saw fit to do so.

What he conveniently neglects to mention is that no government can bind a future government to adhere to this Government's rules or regulations - No Government can bind a fully privatised Telstra to deliver future technology to country people at affordable prices beyond the term of this Parliament.

That is what country people are concerned about - what guarantees of having access to technology in the future - some of which may not even exist yet.

The answer is none" Mr Windsor said.

Senator Alston is quick to criticise Mr Windsor's comments regarding a private Telco and its capacity to provide equitable prices to country people but he omits to say that the current regulations on OPTUS and AAPT do not have any price controls.

"Does Senator Alston honestly believe that a fully privatised Telstra that would start life with Government induced price controls will be satisfied with its competitors OPTUS and AAPT having no price controls.

Such logic defies the very argument of competition that the Government promotes as a means of delivering new technologies into the future," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor wants Senator Alston and National Party Leader John Anderson to answer one simple question.

"Can the current Government bind its successors under our current constitution, to provide current levels of service and future levels of technology to country people at equitable prices?"

Answer the substantive question Senator Alston rather than demeaning your status on a 'cheap' Telstra 'call'," Mr Windsor said.

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