



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MEDIA RELEASE

28th August 2002

TONY WINDSOR MP
INDEPENDENT
FEDERAL MEMBER FOR NEW ENGLAND

Suite 2, Level 1
307 Peel Street
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

All Mail: PO Box 963
TAMWORTH NSW 2340

Ph: (02) 6761 3080

Toll Free: 1800 66 8855

Fax: (02) 6761 3380

e-mail: Tony.Windsor.MP@aph.gov.au

Web Page: www.tonywindsor.com.au

Country Independents unite – **NO** to Telstra Sale

The three country Federal Independents are united against the Government's plan to sell the rest of Telstra explaining that regardless of service standards country Australians want to retain public ownership of the telecommunications giant.

Tony Windsor for New England, Peter Andren for Calare and Bob Katter for Kennedy outlined their opposition and campaign against the Coalition's plans to sell its remaining share of Telstra at Parliament House today.

"All the Coalition's talk about service levels being up to scratch is well off the mark and irrelevant when most Australians want the Government to hold on to Telstra," said Peter Andren, Member for Calare.

"As Independent representatives we will be bringing their voices to Canberra. This is why our constituents voted independent to have their views represented directly to Government free from the party-line," he said.

Tony Windsor, Member for New England said: "Telstra is a working concern, returning 32% on equity for the last financial year so this is not a case of selling off a failing company.

As for the Government ensuring that future technology and services reach the bush through regulation – no Government can legislate to bind a private company to provide services and products that haven't been invented yet.

Even the Prime Minister this week acknowledged that one Government cannot bind any future Government to honour guarantees that it has made," Mr Windsor added.

Member for Kennedy, Bob Katter explained the situation in Normanton in his electorate where people are already being hit with huge bills for maintenance on their phone services.

"These are the people who will be left out of the equation if the sale of Telstra proceeds – they can't afford the couple of thousand dollars it costs for service calls now so what hope will they have with a privatised Telstra.

Communications should be as much about essential service as it is about business and it is only with majority Government ownership that service will be available to people in isolated communities," Mr Katter said.

"In the coming months the Independents will be giving their constituents the chance to have their say to the Government and those in the Senate who will be making the decision on the sale of our Telstra," Mr Windsor added.

Further information from Tony Windsor - Mob 0427 66 8868 or 02 6761 3080