



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Govt g'tees on Sydney Airport under review – what chance Telstra?

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor is amazed at comments by Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson that, in the wake of the QANTAS plane burning brakes incident at Sydney Airport this week and the establishment of an enquiry into the cause, that the Deputy PM will consider changing legislation regarding Sydney Airport's operation and that this has major implications for trusting the Government on the full sale of Telstra.

"Prior to the sale of Sydney Airport, there were a whole range of commitments regarding future proofing and guarantees about noise levels, service levels etc and it was suggested by two Ministers, John Anderson and Nick Minchin, that people should be calm and that they would be satisfied with the outcome. Within two days of the sale, on Thursday 27 June 2002 in the Financial Review, the Minister for Finance and Administration, Nick Minchin, also conceded that a future Government would be open to try and change existing regulations," Mr Windsor said.

Senator Minchin said 'Obviously we can't bind future Governments, but I can't imagine any Government in the future changing those rules.'

"This comment was made just over 12 months ago and within the life of this Parliament and it is already up for review. So what chance the same thing happening with a fully privatised Telstra?" Mr Windsor asked.

Mr Windsor also points to the answer to question he asked of the Prime Minister on the 26th August last year where he asked, "Under the Constitution, what capacity does this parliament have to bind future parliaments to provide services guaranteed by this parliament?"

The Prime Minister's response began "We should always operate under the assumption that a law passed by one parliament can always be repealed by another parliament, and I would not try and pretend otherwise."

"Here we have a law being passed by one Parliament and then coming under review by the same Parliament – not even a different Parliament," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor draws the comparison between the sale of Sydney Airport and the full sale of Telstra and cautions people to really look closely at the future of telecommunications services regardless of where they live, but particularly those residents in country areas.

"Here we have an incident being played down by the airline involved as to the seriousness of its nature being investigated and perhaps as a result having enough influence on the Minister to make legislative and regulatory changes to the operations of what is now a privately owned asset.

As is evidenced by the statements of the Prime Minister and the Minister for Finance and Administration, legislative and regulatory changes could be made on the operations of a fully privatised Telstra in the same way that will adversely affect the delivery of telecommunications services to the country following similar types of investigations or review into its operations.

I'm not prepared to trust the Government on this, are you?" Mr Windsor concluded.