



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

2 September 2004

Windsor challenges Anderson to debate in Inverell Who can people really trust?

Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has challenged the Deputy Prime Minister and National Party Leader John Anderson to debate country issues in Inverell in the lead up to the Federal election.

The challenge comes after the Deputy Prime Minister deliberately misled the people of the New England electorate with comments in the Inverell Times about Mr Windsor's voting in the House of Representatives.

"I would be delighted to put my record of representation of the people of the New England electorate up against the representation of Mr Anderson and the National Party for the electorates that they represent.

Mr Anderson failed to explain that at least a third of all votes in Parliament are political stunts, such as censures by the opposition or the government, or meaningless motions by either side in the game of one-upmanship.

Mr Anderson would also know full well that it is legitimate to abstain from a vote when an MP doesn't agree with the government or opposition as did his own National Party Member for Riverina Kay Hull during the Telstra debate.

The only occasions I have missed being present in the Parliament building has been when the Chinese President attended a special recall of Parliament and on a few occasions when I have had to return to the electorate to attend important meetings and electorate commitments when the Government has extended the sitting week to a Friday despite having the opportunity to conclude business in normal sitting times.

Mr Anderson on the other hand has missed 10 full days of the Parliament and didn't even bother to turn up for the passage through the Parliament of his crowning glory, the Australia-US Free Trade Agreement.

A quarter of the votes of this Parliament (111 out of 400) were attempts by the Government using its numbers to stop other MPs from speaking on issues of concern to them, known as a 'Gag'.

These votes are not votes on policy or legislation and I will always support the right of a member to speak unless they are abusing the Parliamentary process.

Mr Anderson to his eternal shame even used the Government's numbers to 'gag' a debate on drought in November 2002 after only 4 country MPs had had the opportunity to put before the Parliament the specific impacts of drought on their electorates.

His position on attending Parliament must be like his position on our health system – two tiered – one expectation for Government members and one for Independents.

Well, Mr Anderson has been caught out as a hypocrite and I challenge him to a public debate on country issues," Mr Windsor said.

For further information contact Tony Windsor, Ph (02)6761 3080 or 042766 8868

Topics for the Anderson - Windsor debate in Inverell

Mr Anderson may like to debate and explain to the people of Inverell and the broader community

- (1) Why he and the National party voted to sell Telstra when this sale is against the wishes of the people of Inverell and the majority of country people.
- (2) Why he and the other Nationals block voted for a sub-standard \$917 million dollar Medicare package that subsequently had to be amended with the help of Independents to increase the total to \$2.9 billion dollars. This increase to \$2.9 billion included substantial increased dividends for rural health services.
- (3) Why he and the National Party voted to have University of New England's as well as other regional Universities' funding cut, only to have increased regional loadings and other measures re-included in the legislation with the help of Independents.
- (4) Why he took twelve months to back down on the governments excise exemption proposal that threatened regional investment in Ethanol, finally agreeing to the ethanol eight year excise exemption package formulated with the help of Independents.
- (5) Why he refuses to mandate 10% ethanol use in fuel
- (6) Why Mr Anderson continually trumpets regional employment yet conducts regular attacks on Inverell's biggest employer Bindaree beef.
- (7) Why he will not commit to maintaining metropolitan / rural cost parity provisions within guidelines for Telstra's pricing of regional telecommunications services
- (8) Why he supported the Aust-US Free Trade Agreement without a full "independent" analysis by the Productivity Commission
- (9) Why he sold out the sugar, beef, pork, dairy and other agriculture industries in the Free Trade Agreement
- (10) Why he was not in the Parliament to support the passage of his much trumpeted FTA enabling Bill
- (11) Why he has removed the Fuel Sales Grants Scheme worth \$270million per year from country motorists
- (12) Why he and the National Party removed the GST subsidy on educational textbooks from students from kindergarten to university thereby putting a tax on learning
- (13) Why he refuses to provide regional airports with security comparable with city airports as a matter of National Security.
- (14) Why he refuses to adapt Enterprise Zones and Zonal taxation as National Party policy
- (15) Why, as the self proclaimed voice of the country, he embraces National Competition Policy as the panacea to the country's problems