



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Letter to Editor

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Dear Editor

Whilst in Dubbo recently, I was interested to see local businessman Roger Fletcher discussing a future Summit relating to improving infrastructure west of the Blue Mountains.

I am pleased to see that Mr Fletcher has continued on with the concept that was raised some months ago at a meeting at Tamworth Airport with Bindaree Beef's McDonald family and a member of my staff (who was also involved in organising the NSW Country Summits) where the logistics of organising such an event were discussed.

Mr Fletcher's proposal of broadening the idea to ALL levels of Government is to be commended.

I do however take issue with Roger over his support for the full sale of Telstra as a means of funding infrastructure development.

Telecommunications in this century will be THE most important piece of infrastructure for country people.

Equity of access to those services will be the one thing that negates distance as being a disadvantage of living in the country. Selling one paddock to pay for another is NOT the way to go.

Mr Fletcher asked for solutions to the funding of infrastructure into the future and I suggest that the following should be investigated as possibilities.

- 1 putting the \$4 Billion Telstra annual profit/dividend (or part thereof) into an infrastructure development fund
- 2 introducing zonal taxation to promote development
- 3 accessing superannuation funds – particularly to the country paid portion
- 4 putting a portion of the fuel excise into an infrastructure development fund. Approximately \$14 Billion is raised annually from fuel excise with approximately only \$2 Billion returned to roads (remember that 1 cent/litre equates to \$358 million)
- 5 investing some of the projected \$25 Billion in budget surpluses into infrastructure development
- 6 Instead of personal income tax cuts, direct funding to infrastructure development
- 7 Introduce an infrastructure development levy - \$1 per week per person equals \$1 billion per year.
- 8 Investment bonds for infrastructure development with tax incentives

I will try to attend the meeting on November 17 if Parliament's schedule permits, but would ask that these initiatives be examined by the Summit rather than looking at the easiest option of selling Telstra.

We should also remember that after 30th June next year, the Federal Government has the ability to overcome any inertia of the State Governments. It will be the "No excuses Parliament" when it comes to introducing and passing good legislation for country people as the Coalition will have the majority in both the House of Representatives AND in the Senate. No longer will the Government be able to blame the Labor Party, Democrats, Greens or Independents in the Senate for blocking positive country legislation and therefore we should see a lot of action in the area of infrastructure development and the Government won't have to sell Telstra to do it!

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