



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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PM refuses to tell where Telstra guarantees are enshrined in legislation

Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor has today asked the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon John Howard to point out where the 'guarantees', given by the Government to the National Farmers Federation (NFF) President Peter Corish of parity of pricing for country and city consumers for basic telephone and broadband services were enshrined in the legislation.

"I decided to ask the Prime Minister virtually the same question that I asked the Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the National Party Mark Vaile on September 14 in the hope that a higher authority might have the decency to tell country people what the Deputy Prime Minister and the NFF could not.

In light of the answer given to me by the Prime Minister, I have had my opinion that the Government is pulling the wool over country people's eyes reinforced.

If the guarantees are enshrined in the legislation as claimed by the National Farmers Federation, then why won't the Prime Minister point it out," Mr Windsor said.

In his response the Prime Minister said, "What the government intends to do in this area has been announced, and I stand by that. I am not going to start interpreting what other people have said."

"No one, including now the Prime Minister of Australia can point out where the Government's so called guarantees are in the legislation.

The simple fact is there are no guarantees and the NFF has been used as a pawn to progress an agenda that country people did not want

To make no further comment is an attempt to shut down further debate or scrutiny both inside and outside the Parliament," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor says that the sellout by the National Farmers Federation of the farmers and country people of Australia is developing into a high farce.

"The Deputy Prime Minister was unable to answer my question on September 14 and pointed to a Minister's Statement.

The Minister's statement showed nothing and her answers in the Senate did nothing to shed light on the guarantees of parity pricing for country and city consumers for basic telephone and broadband services and now the Prime Minister refuses to point out the parts of the legislation.

The question remains, who gave the guarantees and what are the definitions of 'basic' telephone and broadband services and 'parity' of pricing if the Prime Minister doesn't know?" Mr Windsor asked.

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