



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Telstra sale decision will give rise to a third force

Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor says that the decision to sell \$8 Billion of Telstra shares by the Prime Minister will give rise to a third force in Australian politics that will see the National Party fade away.

Mr Windsor warned in July last year that if the Government went down the full sale of Telstra path that it would give rise to a third force in Australian politics and he can now see this happening.

“I warned in July last year, ‘The Nationals are facing their Waterloo over their position on Telstra and if they make the wrong decision they will face a new third force established to truly represent country people without being tied to one side of politics or the other.

The Telstra sale issue and the future of telecommunications in the country is of such magnitude for country people that if the Nationals want to survive, they must recognise that unless they remain opposed to the full sale of Telstra they will face a bigger challenge to their existence than One Nation ever posed.

This is not an idle threat – this is a promise’,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes it is now time to move on that promise.

“I have been discussing the possibilities of such a third force to fill the void by the National Party becoming ‘The Country Liberals’ and losing their way.

They are no longer the only voice of country people in the Parliaments of Australia and they will be pushed aside by people wanting to deliver better outcomes for country Australia rather than deal better outcomes away.

I will be doing all I can to help develop this non-aligned third force and will work with other like minded people to achieve this,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor believes the Prime Minister’s announcement late on Friday afternoon was an act of desperation trying to remove the Government’s Telstra problem from becoming an election issue next year.

“The Cabinet – including National Party Ministers - met last Tuesday and made no announcement about any decision to proceed to the full sale.

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Yet by late Friday – a time reserved for announcing contentious decisions - the Prime Minister announced the ‘unanimous decision of the Government’s investment advisors that market conditions are appropriate for the sale.’

Well who is running the country – the Government’s investment advisors or the Cabinet and what are appropriate conditions?

With Telstra share prices falling to \$3.50 and the Government previously expecting a \$5 plus sale price, it seems to me that the only investment advisor’s advice would be is to cut your losses and sell out sooner rather than later.

In other words – a fire sale of Telstra shares.

As a country representative in the Parliament, I would be derelict in my duty to those people who have put their faith in me to not do whatever I can to ensure telecommunications infrastructure in the country is as good as that to be found in the city.

This is the one piece of infrastructure that can remove distance and remoteness from living in the 21st century and country Australians are being let down by the National Party those who currently say they are the only true representatives of country people – BUNKUM!!” Mr Windsor said.