



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Being called a 'BUG' by a 'G'NAT is a compliment

Independent Member for New England Tony Windsor has referred to National Party Senator Ron Boswell's outburst against country Independents where he described Independents as 'political bugs', as an admission that the National Party is in trouble.

"Instead of welcoming competition at a political level which would highlight the major issues confronting country people, Senator Boswell resorts to belittling genuine representatives.

Instead of uncompromisingly standing up for country people, Senator Boswell resorts to trying to stamp on anyone who dares to point out the impotency of the National Party in Government," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor says the failure of the National Party to represent the best interests of their constituents on the full sale of Telstra, the US Free Trade Agreement, the failure of the National Water Initiative, the taxing of water compensation payments, a much needed inquiry into the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS), ten years of inaction on Property Rights and the removal of the Fuel Sales Grants Scheme from country motorists shows that the National Party really wants to rule rather than represent country people.

"Even over the weekend at the National Party conference in Canberra, a motion was moved to attempt to guarantee equity of line rental charges for country Australians.

"This was the issue that was supposedly to be enshrined in legislation when Mark Vaile gave a commitment to the NFF President Peter Corish to enable him to assure Barnaby Joyce that all was well and to vote for the legislation." Mr Windsor said

Senator Boswell's central argument that Independents can't deliver is a nonsense.

"Political competition is the 'deliverer' and history shows that political loyalty is not rewarded by the Party system. Why do Parties have marginal seat campaigns?

For example, the Inland Rail concept has been championed by Everal Compton for over 10 years but has only recently gained National Party support due to political competition being offered for the seat of Calare and Parkes and the need to shore up Southern Queensland seats.

When they were safe and subservient seats, there was no mention of support for the concept. Now they are at risk everyone loves a railway line," Mr Windsor said.

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Mr Windsor highlighted the seat of New England as one that had benefited from political competition where previously neglect took place.

1. New England has more Multi Purpose Health Services (MPS – Hospital and Aged Care facilities either built or under construction than any other electorate – Emmaville, Barraba, Bingara, Guyra, Walcha, Tingha, Warialda
2. New England has had more mobile phone towers constructed than any other country electorate – for a Member who opposes the sale of Telstra
3. New England received the second highest amount of Regional Partnerships Program funding in Australia (then Labor seat of Bass received the highest – not a loyal National Party seat)
4. New England received the highest Envirofund allocation in NSW.

Mr Windsor also referred to the great successes of his colleague Independent Member for Calare Peter Andren who had been instrumental in major policy changes including the formations of Telstra Countrywide, the Blackspot Road Program, the turnaround of the Snowy Hydro sale, the mandatory horticulture code and issues of transparency and accountability.

“The fact is the only time that the National Party actually stand up on anything is when they are driven to it by political imperative – competition – not genuine empathy for country constituents. Just look at the development of the ethanol industry,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor who was in a hung Parliament in NSW for 4 years in the early 1990’s said that analysis of the Identifiable Capital Works spent in each seat in NSW over the last 15 years clearly indicates that irrespective of who is in government, Independent Seats do better than their Party neighbours.

“Political competition delivers. Just look at the \$800m skills announcement by the PM last week.

It has been unashamedly driven by the need to respond to political competition.

Ron Boswell and his fellow lapdogs should learn how politics works – competition delivers – always has and always will.

And as for Independents being bugs, we are good bugs and coming from a (G)Nat – which by definition is the lowest form of insect life, an insignificant annoyance and a blight on the political system – it shows that Senator Boswell is only envious of the relationship that Independents have with our constituents because we truly represent not rule over them,” Mr Windsor said.