



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Media Release

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Vaile's spin on broadband only veils Nats selling out again

He accepted second best for country people despite Govt guarantees of equity of access and parity of pricing for broadband and telephone services - now he must live with it!

Claims by the Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the National Party Mark Vaile about the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor's attitude to the Government's OPEL Broadband proposal have been described by Mr Windsor as being only to veil his and the National Party's selling out again on telecommunication services to country people.

At the request of local media for more information, Mr Windsor put out the attached media release yesterday which made no comment about the appropriateness of the Government's plan only giving what the OPEL proposal was for the electorate of New England which had not previously been announced.

As a result, Mr Vaile says that Mr Windsor "*has been caught out saying one thing in his electorate and another in Canberra*", however Mr Windsor simply points to his media release and challenges Mr Vaile to "honestly" point out how so.

"Mr Vaile is grasping at straws as he knows in his heart of hearts that he and the National Party have once again been compromised over their position on telecommunication services to country people.

The National Party started off saying that Telstra would never be sold. That became it would not be sold till service were 'up-to-scratch' in the bush which then became the Estens Inquiry identifying problems with telecommunication services in the bush (a heck of a lot).

Then without having brought the services 'up-to-scratch', Mr Vaile and the National Party agreed to the full sale of Telstra without it being 'up-to-scratch' but having been given 'still-to-be-seen' 'guarantees' that country people would have equity of access and parity of pricing for telephone and broadband services.

Mr Vaile and the National Party accepted second best for country people then and they continue to accept second best telecommunication services for country people thereby contributing to the growing city-country divide rather than using the best telecommunication service to reduce the divide," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor is also amazed that Mr Vaile would give him the opportunity to highlight Mr Vaile and the National Party's track record of "saying one thing in the electorate and another in Canberra".

"Mr Vaile and the National Party are masters at saying one thing in the electorate and another in Canberra.

Their ever-changing position on the Telstra sale and services has just been mentioned above. .../2

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Add to this, Mr Vaile's commitment to wheat growers at a rally at Warracknabeal in Victoria to undertake a poll of them if changes were mooted to the export wheat marketing arrangements. Reneged on!

- A mandatory horticulture code of conduct to include the major retailers within 100 days of the 2004 election – reneged on!
- The taxation of groundwater compensation payments as income saying that such payments have always been taxed this way – took over 2 years and threats of mutiny to finally get an outcome sought by the industry but only in the shadows of the looming election.
- Zonal taxation policy adopted at National Party conferences – now buried in Canberra.
- The Inland Rail project – started in 1996 and now in the shadow of another election there is one rail spike in the ground at Goondiwindi, a number of feasibility studies and now another scoping study that won't be completed until well after the election and underpinned by Mr Vaile's statement that it won't go ahead without private sector funding.
- Ethanol and renewable fuels legislation was eventually supported by the National Party but included the introduction of an excise and they only agreed to the Bill after Democrats and Independents introduced amendments agreed to by the Labor Party which shone the spotlight on the National Party's inaction on the issue.
- Statement by the National Party that there would No US Free Trade Deal without sugar – reneged on.
- The Voluntary Student Unionism (VSU) Bill which has seen regional universities disadvantaged despite being given a regional capital assistance fund but no recurrent funding to maintain and staff the new facilities.

The list goes on," Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor says that what is more disheartening is the forced acceptance of less by country people from the Commonwealth.

"It's the 'starving dog syndrome' where a little given at election time, is made out to be a lot and country people having been starved for so long are then so grateful.

Now in June 2007 it continues with a second rate broadband service from a Government when one of their own Senators is reported as saying that people in rural areas cannot expect proper (broadband sic) services.

Also '...As far as I'm concerned, it's a little bit like medical services, you can't expect to have proper services in the bush, it's just not like that.'

The Nationals appear to have a unique talent of being able to sit on their hands and roll over and play dead at the same time.

When enough country people realise this fact, they won't be playing dead – they will be!" Mr Windsor said.

How New England will access OPEL Broadband

Broadband services to the New England electorate under the Government's Australia Connected Program proposed to be built by OPEL have been released.

New England will have three (3) exchanges upgraded to very fast ADSL2+ broadband and 34 new wireless broadband sites (WiMax) will be built in the region.

These are as follows:

ADSL2+(up to 20 Mbs)- Very fast broadband updated from basic ADSL

Armidale Tamworth. (2)

Wireless Broadband sites (12Mbps) –WiMax

- Armidale (2) Glen Innes Somerton (2)
- Ashford (2) Guyra The Summit (2)
- Bendemeer Halls Creek Tamworth (3)
- Ben Lomond Hanging Rock Tenterfield (3)
- Blackville Inverell Uralla (2)
- Drake (2) Murrurundi Wallabadah (2)
- Dundee Niangala Watson's Creek
- Ebor Oban Wellingrove
- Emmaville Pine Ridge