



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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‘ONCE BITTEN - TWICE SHY’

Be careful about privatising new broadband network

Whilst welcoming the Government’s National Broadband Network announcement today, the Independent Member for New England, Tony Windsor has voiced concern over Finance Minister Lindsay Tanner committing a future government to the full sale of the new Network in the years ahead.

Mr Windsor believes that when lessons are not learnt then history has a way of repeating itself.

“The full sale of Telstra by the Coalition led to job losses, poor services, irresponsible executive remunerations and low share prices.

Australians have already learnt a very hard lesson about the failure of privatisation of a national tax funded resource.

To travel the same path maybe ten years hence will again cause grief to everyone dependent on communications – particularly in regional and rural areas.

The Nation’s telecommunications should be afforded some level of Government tenure and be included as part of Australia’s defence strategy.

A future telecommunications company like Telstra should not be afforded the luxury of sitting back over the next decade, doing very little, only to pick up the prize when the project is completed.” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said the Government should also look to prioritise the NBN rollout. He said those in most need and who have been the most disadvantaged through recent market driven decisions based on greed and profit should receive equal and timely access.

“Barring any technical requirements, where the NBN rollout begins and ends is up for grabs. As opposed to who gets super fast broadband first and who gets it last, it would be preferable that other factors, possibly the inadequacy and or costs of current services in some communities, be considered,” Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said based on surveys conducted when Telstra was to be sold he predicted that there would be an enormous political backlash against a future government tempted to sell of the Nation’s assets.

“Once bitten – twice shy. I know who will end up being bitten the next time around.” Mr Windsor said.

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