



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Beware false gods in Property Rights debate: Labor, Liberal and National Party records on Property Rights are pathetic

Member for New England, Tony Windsor MP, cautioned Property Rights Rally campaigners not to be taken in once again by the false gods preying on the carcass of Peter Spencer.

“I attended the 1985 Canberra rally as a young farmer with a high degree of expectation but was sold out by people in political and agri-political positions who only were interested in progressing their own political objectives.” Mr Windsor said.

“Since then, we have seen a litany of land and property asset acquisitions, agricultural institution destruction and policy default on all sides of politics that have weakened the farm sector.

“The sale of public property such as Telstra, the disbanding of the single desk, the contemplation of selling the people’s property in relation to the Snowy Hydro Scheme, the sale of the Grain Handling system by the Greiner Government, even though the wheat growers had paid for the infrastructure, the sell-out on the US Free Trade Agreement and the destruction of the Dairy industry are also examples of the removal of rights. More recently the theatrics in the Federal Senate when the National, Liberal and Labor Parties capitulated to the Minerals Council on the mining exploration licences issued on the Liverpool Plains are examples of political duplicity.

“Many farmers will recall that the original 1994 Competition Policy Agreement between the States and the Commonwealth was based on national recognition of property rights and compensation for the removal of those rights.

“And as John Anderson, John Howard and Warren Truss claimed from time to time, no competition payments would be made to the States without due compensation for the property rights lost.

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“These rights were never recognised: in fact, John Howard endorsed the Kyoto land clearing arrangements and John Anderson ladled out \$8.0 billion in terms of water reform to the States without demanding any compensation from the States to those affected by the reforms, even though he had the power to demand compensation.

“The only time the Commonwealth pulled rank on the States by threatening to withhold competition policy payments was to Labor Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie. On that occasion it was used to bribe Beattie into stopping land clearing in Queensland. Now we see some of the same players arguing for the down-trodden farmers’ rights.

“The neglect of the Competition Policy rules was essentially a breach of the law or at least the spirit of the law. Mr Windsor said.

Mr Windsor said: “The only time since the 1985 Rally where ‘Just Terms Compensation for farmers’ was recognised was the *Land Acquisition (Just Terms Compensation) Act 1991* in NSW. This only happened because a country Independent held the balance of power in a hung parliament! Previously the Liberal Party kept delaying the then Deputy Premier, Wal Murray’s, initiative because it would upset the green vote.

“On that occasion it was the then CEO of the NSW Farmers Association, John White, who assisted with the achievement of ‘Just Terms’.

Mr Windsor said: “The only way compensable property rights for removal of capacity to earn income would be through political structures outside the Labor, Liberal and National Parties. Any other conclusion is ignoring history.

“To observe the political players profiteering from a man up a pole; the loose language about protecting the food bowl, when for the past twenty years Governments have done everything possible to either demonise agriculture, patronise it or sell it out to overseas interests, disgusts me and I hope that young farmers who attend this latest Rally aren’t as gullible as I was as a young farmer in 1985”, Mr Windsor said.