



Speech by

**Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

Hansard 21 August 2003

### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

#### **Overseas Trip; Telstra**

**Hon. H. PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (10.19 a.m.): I table the report of my recent trade mission to Japan and South Korea from 12 July to 19 July.

If there is one word that the National Party has been careful not to say in this place this week it is 'Telstra'. Despite this being the first sitting of state parliament since the Howard government announced its renewed plans to fully privatise Telstra, the National Party here in Queensland has been silent. A contrite Leader of the Queensland Nationals issued a media statement last month claiming—

Queensland Nationals were standing firm in their opposition to the full sale of Telstra.

But what has the member for Southern Downs said since? He has said nothing. He has done nothing. His coalition colleagues are debating the legislation in Canberra now. Peter Lindsay, the Liberal member for Herbert, said—

The electorate wants to see the full privatisation of Telstra.

The member for Maranoa, Bruce Scott, said—

I would only support the full sale of Telstra once services in the bush were up to scratch.

Then the Nationals member for Dawson, De-Anne Kelly, said—

There is no way in truth that I could say that Telstra services have not improved. They have improved to an extraordinary extent. But that is not enough.

The problem with Bruce Scott and De-Anne Kelly is that they are supporting the legislation. They are not planning to cross the floor.

What about the member for Hinkler, Paul Neville? What did he say about the legislation yesterday? He said—

The people of Australia are not fools. They recognise that Telstra is not an end in itself but rather a means to an end.

Why is the coalition here in Queensland and in Canberra treating the community like fools? This week the Australian Communications Authority identified 50 Telstra rural exchange services that needed improvement. Six of those exchanges are in Queensland. These are exchanges. I am not talking about mobile phones, I am not talking about Internet speeds or next generation communication technology; I am talking about rural exchanges.

The fact is telecommunication services in rural and regional Australia are not up to scratch. Services between country and city Australia are not equitable. A fully privatised Telstra will not be focused on addressing these inequities. Telstra's priority will not be ensuring the latest telecommunications technology is available in rural and regional Australia. A fully privatised Telstra will be driven by one thing: the dollar.

Time is running out for the member for Southern Downs to renew his interest in this issue. He cannot sit back and let his colleagues in Canberra support this legislation and the full sell-off of Telstra. I ask members to remember this: less than one per cent of the proceeds from the further sale of Telstra will be spent on telecommunication services in rural and regional Australia. It is about time that the opposition stood up for Queenslanders and voted against the sale of Telstra in Canberra.