



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

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**TELSTRA SALE:
ONE THOUSAND NOVOCASTRIANS CAN'T BE WRONG**

Sharon Grierson, Member for Newcastle, today tabled a petition of 1,089 citizens of Newcastle, the Hunter and the wider region, opposition the Howard Government's plans to flog off the rest of Telstra.

Ms Grierson said yesterday's announcement of the full sale plan was another example of Howard Government horse-trading that puts its special interests ahead of the national interest.

"In this case it's special interest is in saving the embarrassment of the National Party, which promised not to sell the rest of Telstra until services were up to scratch. The \$1.1 billion pay-off to rural Australia announced yesterday might make the Nationals feel better about selling out on Telstra, but it won't ensure service delivery obligations are met."

"It may save some of their skins at the next election, but for ordinary Australians living in cities, towns and the bush, the internet is still too slow, the mobile still drops out, the wait for phone repairs still takes over three months, and rental and call charges increase unchecked."

"In Newcastle, we are still plagued by these problems - particularly in areas such as Fletcher, Maryland, Birmingham Gardens and Shortland where limited Exchange facilities and the presence of unsuitable pair gain phone lines makes connection to Broadband a frustrating, confusing, lengthy, and sometimes impossible process."

"If Telstra, with a majority public shareholding, can't guarantee Broadband access in the suburbs of our major cities, what's it going to be like after full privatisation?"

"The 1,089 people who have signed a petition against the full sale of Telstra clearly don't want to find out."

"The Government should be investing in decent services for all Australians as a matter of course, not as a rural bribe to get enough votes in the Senate for its ideological obsession with the sale of Telstra."

For more information contact Sharon Grierson on 4926 1555

Canberra
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
Ph: 02 6277 4221
Fax: 02 6277 8461



Newcastle
427 Hunter Street
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300
Ph: 02 4926 1555
Fax: 02 4926 1895
www.sharongrierson.com