

Telstra has to remain in public hands: Lee

Country Alliance's local candidate for the Upper House, Danny Lee, said last weeks complaint by Telstra over the ACCC's decision to reject flat-rate charges for access to its land based network by its competitors, demonstrated the very reason why the telco should not be sold.

The telco said it had been whittling down the price and was only asking for basic cost recovery. It expressed concern that competitors would 'cherry pick' customers.

"We have been against the sale of Telstra since day one," he said.

"If the company is concerned about losing customers to competitors, then it shows that it is more interested in its shareholders than its customers - us. It is a monopoly business that has to remain in public hands," he said.

"Yet we've had a succession of Labor and Coalition Governments who have instead tried to cash in everything from our electricity companies to the Snowy Hydro to fund election commitments."

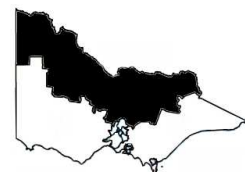
"Our position is that all essential infrastructure needs to remain in public hands so we can ensure that community needs and expectations are part of the decision making process."

Mr Lee also expressed concern over Telstra's commitment to maintaining a skilled workforce.

"I understand from media reports that Telstra had not trained a single apprentice under the Federal Governments subsidy scheme which offers \$1,100 incentives to take on apprentices."

"The report I have seen suggest the company has not employed any apprentices under the scheme since 20000. If that's the case, then I have to wonder why anyone would even contemplate selling a monopoly business that provides an essential service if maintaining it is in question," he said.

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