



SENATOR THE HON JONNO DUNIAM
SHADOW MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION
MANAGER OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS IN THE SENATE
LIBERAL SENATOR FOR TASMANIA

**TRANSCRIPT – PRESS CONFERENCE – FITZROY
GARDENS, HOBART**

14 June 2026

E&OE ...

JONNO DUNIAM: Today I am obviously announcing that I won't be seeking re-preselection or indeed re-election for the Senate here in Tasmania. It's been the honour of a lifetime to serve my party and more importantly this State for 10 years in the Senate. I haven't wasted a day of my time in that job. Now whether people have agreed with what I've said and done or not is irrelevant because, what you do when you put your hand up for public office, is you stick to what you believe in, advocate for the outcomes you think are right for the community you represent and go like the clappers to make sure you get the best outcome. And that's what I've done every day for the last 10 years.

But, 10 years on top of 15 years prior to that of being in and around politics ... 25 years of my life dedicated to long hours and being away from home a lot ... has taken a toll on my family and so we've made a decision that this is in the best interests of my family and me.

Only last night, as I was reading 'Diary of a Wimpy Kid' to my 11 year old son, it made absolute sense that I was making this decision. I have no regrets about pulling up stumps and paving the way for someone else to take on the challenge of restoring the trust that we sadly have lost over the last two elections to ensure that we win back the votes we need to return more than two Senators to the Federal Parliament. That we can take back the seats of Bass and Braddon and hopefully Lyons, too, at some point in the future. I'm proud of my record of achievement; as I say, I haven't wasted a single day. And I'm proud of the things that the team and I have been able to achieve. Whether it is being able to secure the future of the Mersey Hospital in Northwest Tasmania, funding to support tourism, fisheries and forestry related businesses through the COVID pandemic and the economic Armageddon that followed on from that. And indeed, just the little things that have helped out members of our community here in Tasmania. I've had the honour of serving in the Ministry under Scott Morrison and the Shadow Ministry under Peter Dutton, Sussan Ley and of course now Angus Taylor. That has come with its own challenges and of course if you take this job seriously it takes a lot of work and that is exactly what I've done.

This job has been a very serious one and as a result has taken up a lot of time and lot of energy. It is odd to fight hard to get in. It's even odder when you fight harder to stay and then to pull up stumps. But as I say, when family come into it, you can't think twice about it. Your priorities become very, very clear. And when I brought home the Sunday Tasmanian and sat it on the table, my youngest son when he woke up this morning said, "I thought this day would never come". So, while there is still a little bit of time between now and when I depart, I thought it was important to indicate to my party who are going through a pre-selection process, to my colleagues and to the people of Tasmania what my intentions are.

I'm happy to take any questions.

JOURNALIST: Would you be leaving now if it looked like the Liberals had a more realistic chance of forming government after the next election?

JONNO DUNIAM: Look, those who are closest to me and those around me know that this is something I've been weighing up for quite some time. I've got three boys, all at different stages in their growing up – and not being around, not being a part of a lot of what they have gone through, has been very difficult. It's been left to my wife to deal with all of those things and, so for a long time now, this is something that we've been weighing up and my team, my colleagues in Canberra and trusted friends know that I've been weighing this up for a while. Where we're at in the polls is irrelevant. You've got to remember, of course, if we won the next election and I happened to be a Minister, that workload that takes me away from my children in particular would double, triple or quadruple. And if I'm talking about family versus work, then I can tell you now, it wouldn't matter whether we were on the precipice of a landslide win, or the doldrums of electoral defeat, I would be making the same decision I am today.

JOURNALIST: What do you say to critics who say this is a case of rats abandoning a sinking ship?

JONNO DUNIAM: Well, they only have to listen to what I have to say and if they actually knew me, they'd know why I'm making this decision. Of course, there is an element of my thinking that I'm letting down my team, I'm letting down my party by going. But, at the end of the day, I have to make a choice that's right for my family, in particular my three sons who have often come second to the work that I do. We've got our work cut out for us. I'm not going to deny that the Liberal Party faces some exceptional challenges Federally and no one is pretending that isn't the case. But I know that my colleagues are up to that task and I want to support them in any way I can. That just won't be at the ballot box. I know we can do it under Angus and that's my ardent hope for the future.

JOURNALIST: What do you make of the direction? I know you're still in the party so you're still a member so you can't speak too freely but are you satisfied with the direction of the party?

JONNO DUNIAM: We've got to remember it's only been three months since Angus took over the leadership. We had a lacklustre first nine months of this term after an election result that you could only say was disastrous for us. And to that end, three months is not a lot of time to be able to turn the dial and get things heading in the direction we need to. I know what our plans are for the next while and I know what Angus has got in the works when it comes to policy and it's the kind of stuff I know Australians are looking for. So, I'm looking forward to him and the rest of the team ... and for my time still in the party and the parliamentary party and on the front bench ... I am looking forward to us selling that to the community and making sure they understand we hear them and we are doing what we can to respond to the concerns they have. That's where we've gone wrong in the past and I'm comfortable and confident that we will be able to present to Australia what they need and want and turn these numbers around.

JOURNALIST: In your statement, you spoke about seeing through the work that the party is doing on migration. What does that mean? What's the finishing point in terms of developing that?

JONNO DUNIAM: Well obviously we've announced part of our policy around the values test and of course pegging the migrant intake to housing completions in this country. There are more elements that will need to be announced with regard to skilled migrants, with regard to international students and an overall number and how we will deal with those things. So I'm still doing that work alongside colleagues like James Paterson and Andrew Hastie and others to ensure that we get the best outcome policy-wise. Now it will be up to Angus when we announce that. The timing of course needs to be sorted for all of those things but I will do everything I can, and as I have every day since I was elected to the Senate in 2016, to give my all to this job and that task and make sure I leave the desk pretty tidy on the way out the door.

JOURNALIST: What sort of discussions did you have with the Opposition Leader? Did he ask you to stay on for a bit longer?

JONNO DUNIAM: Look, I won't go into private conversations but of course he understood exactly why I'm making this decision. I don't think any Opposition Leader wants members of their team to depart; they want them to stay on to see out the term. That is something that just was not possible and he understood that. I've committed to him that I will continue on to complete the work that I can for him. That is the least I can do. As I say, I feel like I am letting down the team and I did say that to him, I've said that to a number of colleagues, good friends, loyal colleagues and trusted allies, I'm leaving the field of battle and leaving them on it, which is not a good feeling. But, at the end of the day, one has to make a choice. I've got three boys; I've got a family that I need to ensure have me around as well and that's why I made this decision. But I'm grateful, I am grateful for the support of my family, I am grateful to Liberal Party members here in Tasmania who gave me a go on two occasions now, and I just hope I haven't let them down with the duties I've discharged over the last decade.

JOURNALIST: You're obviously very close with Andrew Hastie. If he was Leader at the moment, would you have made the same decision?

JONNO DUNIAM: Again, having discussed this with Andrew, he understands the reasons for my decision. I think he would prefer me to stay on, but it is important that I do what's right by those closest to me and, you know, Angus, Andrew, James Paterson, Michaelia Cash, Anne Ruston, all of them, Jane Hume, they are going to do the best they can and I know they're going to take the fight up to Labor and to One Nation and present a credible alternative for the Australian people. Whether I'm part of that team or not, really, at the end of the day, is immaterial. A good friend of mine, and I'm sure it's often been quoted by a number of people in different circumstances, told me graveyards are full of indispensable people and at the end the day someone else is going to take my place, others are going to step up and show what they've got to offer and my party will, as I said, give Australians a real alternative when it comes to voting at the next election.

JOURNALIST: The Coalition is obviously grappling nationwide with how to deal with One Nation. Here in Tasmania, that's starting to rear its head as well. What do you think the path through that challenge is?

JONNO DUNIAM: I think that we need to do what any political party does in the lead up to any election, and that is to put its best foot forward. Go out and tell people why they should be voted for. We haven't done that properly. So, all of this talk about preference deals and coalitions is way too premature and, in fact, not even relevant. Our job is to win back the votes we lost. Our job is to go out and make sure people understand why the Liberal Party and the National Party in coalition are the team to back. We've got to do that before any discussion around preferences and all of those matters related to an actual election. Because, if we're just going to wave the white flag and say that it's over now, we've just got to do deals with others to get across the line, then we're not doing our job properly. We're Liberals. We are a major party, a party of government in this country. And in coalition with the Nationals, we can form government. We just have to do the work to be able to convince people we are able to do that. And so that's what we need to be doing between now and the next election to make sure that people see that we can deliver, what it is we are offering and that what we are offering is what they need and want.

JOURNALIST: This means there's potentially two Senate spots up. Obviously, there's been a few names flying about in recent days on who might take those spots on the Senate ticket. Are there any that you're happy to throw your hat in the ring for and give your opinion to?

JONNO DUNIAM: Woe betide an outgoing Senator on potential incoming Senator names! Look, I know our party will do a great job in picking the best candidate for the jobs. The only name I have had confirmed to me is Brad Stansfield. And I will say this; we are in the business of winning votes. And he is someone who has a good track record of winning votes. Albeit not on the ballot paper, always behind the scenes. But, if we are serious about taking on One Nation and winning back the seats that we lost to Labor at the last election, then we need to make sure we have political smarts in the mix and so I hope my party do a good job and pre-select some very good campaigner candidates.

JOURNALIST: Has Brad Stansfield putting his hat in the ring influenced this decision that you've made in any way, shape or form?

JONNO DUNIAM: No, that Brad is putting his hat in the ring is entirely a decision for him. He's a great mate of mine and he's a man I look forward to supporting. But my decision was one that I made independently and it's one that I've been contemplating for a long time. This job is not easy if you take it seriously. If you actually want to do a good job, including to turn up with you guys on Sundays and Saturdays and in far-flung corners of the country, it is hard work. To that end, I have given it everything that I possibly can, but it is time for me to pull up stumps and allow others to have a go. The things that happen outside of me making this decision are unrelated. This is Jonno Duniam making this decision for those around him, his family, and that's all it is.

JOURNALIST: Would you expect One Nation to win a Senate seat in Tasmania at the next election?

JONNO DUNIAM: Well, I think obviously Tammy Tyrrell, having defected to Labor, is in a very vulnerable position and she is probably the most likely at risk of losing a seat to Lee Hanson. Lee Hanson and the Hanson name is obviously one that is attractive to voters at this point in time. I think they are a serious and credible potential for picking up a seat here. Again though, we have to stick to our lane and be eyes front the whole way. We've got to focus on actually being relevant to Tasmanians and giving them a reason to vote for us. At the last election, clearly we did not and so to that end, our job is to, between now and whenever that next election is, make sure that Tasmanians know if you want change, if you want something good to happen in Tasmania's interest, then you're going to have to vote for our team and we'll have the policies to convince them to do so.

JOURNALIST: Tony Burke has acknowledged this morning housing supply is out of whack with migration intake but cautions cuts to immigration could hurt the economy. What's your response to that?

JONNO DUNIAM: Well, something's got to give and the Labor Party of course say they're building homes. They're not. They say they are bringing down the number of immigrants coming into the country. They're not. So, what's going to happen here? Are they just going to merrily plough on and keep bringing in more people than we build houses for, or are they going to do something about it? We've outlined that we would peg the overall migration intake, net overseas migration, to housing completions as a start. That is one of the factors we will bring into our decision-making process in government as to how many people we would bring in in the following year. Labor aren't even contemplating housing as a metric to consider when deciding how many people come into this country. We're not about willy-nilly waving the axe about and cutting numbers randomly. This is about doing it sustainably. If we're not building houses, if we haven't got hospital beds, if we haven't got space in schools, if we're not building roads, then it is only going to get harder to live in this country if we don't manage migration. This is not immigrants' fault, this is the Government's fault. And they say they're building houses. They're not. They need to get real about that, they need to start actually picking up the phone to State and Territory Premiers and Chief Ministers and saying, lift your game, do something about land release and housing supply. Because we know the Commonwealth Government doesn't build homes, even though they say they do, but this is where the rubber hits the road. They're not doing the work. It's good that the Government have finally acknowledged that.

I do want to pay tribute to Tony Burke. On many issues, we've been able to work very well together. We'll disagree on a number of things, which we openly do. But, at the end of the day, there are members of the Government who I have had the honour and privilege of working with and I respect. Tony is one of them, Jason Clare, my former opponent in Education is another. And Penny Wong and Katy Gallagher have been terrific to work with. And I want Australians to know that, for all the bickering, for all of the to-ing and fro-ing, there is a lot of good work that gets done behind the scenes. You never read about it, you never hear about it, you never see it. But good things do happen behind the scenes. At the end the day Liberal, Labor, Green, One Nation, whatever: we're all Australians first and we actually want the best for our country.

JOURNALIST: Was it nice to hear Tony Burke call you one of the best and brightest minds as well?

JONNO DUNIAM: I won't say I was upset at hearing that but, look, I'll allow others to run commentary on me as they invariably do, and I'm sure will for some time to come. Again, when you have good working relationships with colleagues, as I do and I know others on my team do, you do build respect for one another. And I leave behind an incredible team of colleagues in the Shadow

Cabinet and the full Liberal and Joint Party Rooms of people who are committed, in very tough times, to doing the best they can for this country. And I know Angus has got what it takes, he's got the energy, I've seen it up close and personal and I know that the way he leads meetings, the way that he dissects issues, it's a real change for us and we are going to get a very good outcome as a result.

JOURNALIST: Just on political rhetoric, we heard the Prime Minister a few weeks ago talk about toning it down a little bit. Are you worried about the direction that politics is headed towards in the country?

JONNO DUNIAM: Look, obviously rhetoric is something that we need to keep an eye on. It was words, of course, that led to the actions at Bondi. What people say actually does matter. It might be a flippant remark in a press conference, it could be other banter. I mean, I don't want there to be thought police roaming the countryside but, when it comes to us as political leaders, we do set the tone. And what we say is what we deem to be acceptable. And, of course, there are some who have been less than acceptable in what they've said. They're often called out for it, which is a good thing, but we do have to be temperate in what we say because words do have meaning.

JOURNALIST: Just on the budget is the Coalition trying to force a six-month inquiry into the Government's NDIS overhaul?

JONNO DUNIAM: Well, we do believe that on two fronts there's legislation that has massive ramifications before the Parliament. The Government does not have the numbers in the Senate. They need the support of either the Greens or the Coalition to be able to get any of their legislation through. The hearings we've had thus far into the NDIS Bill have raised some significant concerns. There are, at last count that I'd checked, more than 4,000 submissions that had been made to the inquiry. Now how anyone can read all of those before the end of next week and be prepared to make and move amendments and pass or block a bill is beyond me. So, I think it is important we do take our time to get this right. If the Government can allay all of these concerns, then that is a step in the right direction but of course we are talking about a very truncated time frame to some significant changes. Necessary changes. There are changes that need to be made to the NDIS but the devil's always in the detail and we want to make sure we get it right and it's the same with the tax laws. There are huge ramifications for how our economy will function, for investor appetite, and what that means when those changes come into effect. What it will do for economic activity. They're talking about carve-outs on the run and changing bits and pieces of the legislation. You know, taking off as the plane's being built has never ended well for our country. To that end, on both pieces of legislation, be it a six month inquiry for the NDIS or similar, then let's have a proper look at this stuff and do our job properly in the interests of the people of Australia.

JOURNALIST: My colleague says a six month inquiry would cost the budget millions. Is that a responsible course of action?

JONNO DUNIAM: Sorry, what was that? A delay?

JOURNALIST: Yeah, a delay of six months could cost millions. Is that a responsible course of action?

JONNO DUNIAM: Well, the ball's in the Government's court. We are willing to work with the Government and we've been in discussions with them. It's not just take it or leave it. They try this all of the time, forgetting that they don't have the numbers in the Senate. The people of Australia sent a mixed bag to Canberra when it comes to its Senate representation. So, I say to Minister Butler and I say to the Government, work with us. We can get good outcomes. We might be able to do it quite quickly if you work with us on any changes that might be needed. We do want to see an inquiry into those tax laws extended beyond the beginning of next sitting week because again, massive ramifications are coming out of these changes to tax laws in Australia and I want to make sure that we get it right. So, we're here, we're ready to work with you, Government. Come on down and have a chat with us and we might be able to get some good outcomes for everyone.

JOURNALIST: Just finally, where do you think the country's headed towards as you sort of leave towards the end of this year? Do you think your country's in a better position than when you first

entered politics? Are you worried about the future?

JONNO DUNIAM: I am worried about the future, definitely. If you weren't worried about the future, there is something very wrong. There's a lot going on in the world and here in this country that I never thought we'd see in my lifetime, let alone in my time in the Senate. It's been a chaotic time, the Constitutional crisis and the revolving door of Senators, the double dissolution that I came in on, COVID, the international conflicts and what they've done for cost of living. There's a lot in this world that I wasn't contemplating dealing with when I was elected to the Senate, but it's an uncertain world and so I do worry about what the world's going to be like for my kids when they grow up and want to start families and take out mortgages and the like. The days of certainty I think are broadly behind us and in this uncertain world I think we do need to make sure that we have policies that put our country first and the interests of our nation ahead of others. There's nothing wrong with saying that. Whether it's in immigration, whether it's in defence spending, whether it's related to health or the NDIS, we've got to do what's right for our country and our people.

JOURNALIST: When did you first start considering this decision and was there a moment, a particular moment, that sort of crystallised it for you?

JONNO DUNIAM: Thanks Britt. Look, I've been considering this, would you believe, since 2022, after the last election ... sorry, the election before last. Again, I just recommenced a Senate term and I remember sitting down with my family and knowing how hard it was and, you know, you don't go into detail about these things, but my kids obviously were struggling with my absences, and I had to make a call at that point. The decision was made to recommit. So, this has been something I've been battling with for some time. In terms of moments that crystallised it for me, I have to say I think the leadership change earlier this year was a point in time where I thought, I've had enough. I think there are things that I need to tend to that are more important than this. It was a difficult time for our party. It's not the first leadership change I've been a part of, but they are energy and time consuming. They don't generally help in a party's pursuit of government and good policy and good outcomes. But at that point in time, it was clear to me that it was something I needed to do. And I'd made it clear to Angus and others that it's on my mind and so I'm now just giving voice to that today, drawing a line and allowing the party here in Tasmania and of course my colleagues to get on with what they need to do because there is no time to waste. We've got to get onto the job of actually giving Australians an alternative properly and I know Angus and the team will do exactly that.

JOURNALIST: Senator, Conor McGoverne from Nine, congratulations on your career and to your family for getting you back. On that point where you just said that the leadership change was the kind of pivotal moment in that. Is that a reflection in the direction that the party was going? We've even seen this morning your language versus Phil Thompson's, for example. You're striking a more defiant tone against One Nation, whereas he's more open to it. I think it's very reflective of what seems to be coming out publicly. So, when you say that that leadership change was that kind of, again, just a frustration where things were headed?

JONNO DUNIAM: Just on the leadership change and the catalysing of my decision, when you take a job seriously, you give it everything. You get up every day, you go hard, you do your best. You try not to let anyone down and you try and cover the field. I mean, in Opposition, you've got to be everywhere, talking to everyone, doing as much as you can or else you'll get completely missed. The leadership change was an exhausting process. It was a difficult one. I mean we'd come off the back of dealing with net zero, again internally as our party grappled with that issue. That personally was very exhausting. I'd only just taken on the Home Affairs portfolio. We had our response to Bondi, again a deeply exhausting process, one that I put a lot of effort into, supported by others of course. But, when the leadership change came along, it started to really wear on me. It was less about direction and more about my personal energy levels. And to that end, that is why I made that decision.

With regard to the direction of the party and One Nation, there will be a time where parties have to think about who they work with to form government, who they do preference deals with. That time is not now. It is two years before an election and I've got no issue with colleagues talking about what we may or should do come the time. Right now, though, our number one job is winning back the votes we've lost. There are people who are disgruntled with us, who've gone and said, well we're not backing you anymore, we've given you a chance, we're going to perhaps vote for One Nation. And now, if that is the case, we need to win them back. We need to give them a reason to vote one Liberal or one

National before we even contemplate any of these other issues around preference deals or putative coalition agreements with other parties outside the Liberals and Nationals. That's our job now, and I think that what every political party should be doing. I've never met a member of the Greens who doesn't say that they should be voted number one, or a member of the Labor Party who says it's alright, you vote Green first and we'll do a deal with the Greens after the fact. They want your number one vote and, to that end, any Liberal or National MP or Senator should be asking for number one votes in order to win the next election. That's our job and that's what I hope my colleagues get about and start doing.

JOURNALIST: Jonno, just very quickly, perhaps before we officially wrap up, what's next for you? Will you continue to look at another career in politics perhaps behind the scenes? What's next?

JONNO DUNIAM: No, no, once one shuts the door on politics, and as I've said in my statement, 25 years, a quarter of a century allocated to politics, I think is more than enough for anyone. So, there'll be no politics, no State politics, no Federal politics, no politics anywhere. I'll be saying goodbye. I'll always support the party that has given me so much. And they are like a family. They have, you know, all sorts of wonderful people in that party who I love and who I will miss, both in Canberra and here in Tasmania. What's next? I genuinely have no plans. I've got to figure that out. I've made this decision and as I said to someone yesterday in talking this issue through, had I been worrying about what I'd do next, I think I would have been so overwhelmed I probably wouldn't have made this decision. So, this is called a leap of faith. What's next? Who knows?