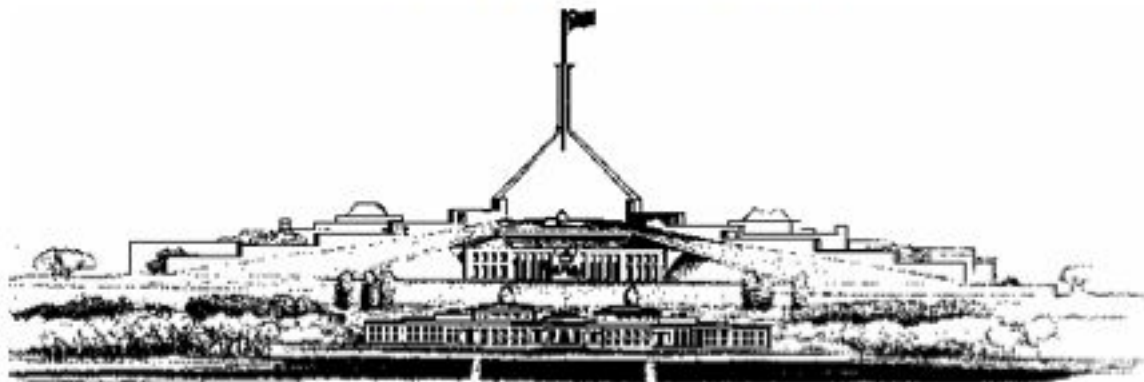




COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

National Broadband Network

SPEECH

Monday, 26 May 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

Date Monday, 26 May 2014
Page 139
Questioner
Speaker Taylor, Angus, MP

Source House
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Question No.

Mr TAYLOR (Hume) (11:30): There can be few issues of more importance to the people of Hume than telecommunications. We have over 18,000 people a day travelling into Sydney and Canberra for work, and each one of them wants a connection so that they can work outside of office hours when they need to. The Hume corridor between Sydney and Canberra is the tree change capital of Australia with huge numbers of people moving out of those cities for a wonderful rural lifestyle.

I also have the electorate of small businesses. I have lots of edges and not many centres, and that means small business proliferates right across the electorate and those small businesses need telecommunications for the effectiveness of their business.

I understand rural Australia. The member for Greenway does not because she does not come from that area. We understand how disastrous Labor's policies were on the NBN for rural Australia. There is a long list of rivals for Labor's worst, most disastrous program, but the rural NBN has to be at the top of the list.

Let us touch on just one aspect of their failure to deliver for rural Australia and that is the Interim Satellite Service. The NBN Interim Satellite Service attempts to provide temporary internet access for premises in metropolitan fringe, but particularly in more remote areas where there is no other means of getting the internet. In July 2013 Labor told 250,000 households and businesses, many with other broadband options, that they were eligible for the interim satellite solution.

But in December 2013, less than six months later, the interim satellite solution reached its capacity of 48,000 customers, having promised it to 250,000—another of Labor's extravagant claims that prove to be a huge problem for the people of rural Australia. What is worse is they spent \$351 million on the interim satellite solution—that is \$7,300 per user—and it delivered little more than dial-up broadband speeds. What an extraordinary waste.

In my electorate of Hume this was real people with real businesses. The Dysons moved into my electorate, hoping to run an education business using broadband. They were promised they would be able to achieve 20 megabits per second or thereabouts of download speeds to run their business. They quickly found that that was impossible and had to move their business into town where they could get higher speeds.

This government moved in April 2014 to fix Labor's mistakes and \$34 million was committed to improving the Interim Satellite Service and to improve broadband quality. That is just one of the problems. I could stand here and talk for 30 minutes or however long you like about the rest of them.

What is important is to talk about where we are going with all of this. We understand that better telecommunications is the key to unlocking growth in regional Australia. In March I announced the first towers in my electorate for fixed wireless services near Cowra and Young. Six new towers are under construction in Cowra and Young—in fact most of them are now up—and they will provide fast broadband access to thousands of residents as part of our reprioritisation to rural Australia. The towers are at Koorawatha, the Olympic Highway between Cowra and Koorawatha, Gooloogong, the Lachlan Valley Way between Gooloogong and Cowra, south of Canowindra and between Derbys Falls and Wyangala—all areas with huge problems with the internet.

Recently, I was at the Koorawatha show and saw one of these sparkling new towers that have been a long time coming. There is still a wait for these areas to be connected. It will take up to 12 months, but the residents can at last see hope. Around the town of Goulburn we will also be seeing a rapid rollout in the coming 12 months of fixed wireless internet towers.

So this government is moving on the problems in rural Australia. We understand the need for reprioritisation, but we also understand the need to allow the private sector to play a role. In the village of Harden the community has taken this problem into its own hands and is rolling out its own fixed wireless solution. Around Palerang, just on the edge of Canberra, Wireless4U has been rolling out fixed wireless towers for some time.

Our NBN is not seeking to push out private sector providers. In fact, we are seeking to encourage them. That is a critical part of our strategy. I commend this motion to the House.