



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Hume Electorate: Telecommunications**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 25 February 2014**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Taylor, Angus, MP

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**Responder**  
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**Mr TAYLOR** (Hume) (21:05): I rise to speak on a matter of great importance to businesses and constituents in Hume: the need for improved telecommunications. If you are smart enough to set up a business along the Hume corridor between Sydney and Canberra, one of the busiest transport routes in Australia, you would be thinking you would have access to reasonable telecommunications. Well, you would not. One business—and I know there are many more—Choice Seedlings at Werombi, near Camden, is so frustrated they are thinking of going elsewhere. In the words of the owner, Germaine Borg:

We are considered one of the biggest players in the vegetable seedling game yet we are losing business every week due to poor communications. We have tried training our customers to call our landline but they don't want to speak to the receptionist, they want an answer straight away.

During the election I visited 70 villages across the electorate and it became clear to me just how important this issue is for Hume. Small businesses rely on connectivity and, as more people move out of Sydney and Canberra into my electorate and nearby areas, the importance of this issue is intensifying. The government's \$100 million Mobile Coverage Program is an important step towards addressing this disadvantage.

Tonight I would also like to talk about internet services. Many businesses and households in Hume are struggling with the disadvantage of unreliable internet with low speeds and constant dropouts. At my house just 10 kilometres from Goulburn and just a few kilometres off the Hume Highway, we get one megabit per second on a good day using wireless.

Recently, I have been getting feedback about congestion, slow download speeds and frequent dropouts on the NBN interim satellite service—and that is if you were lucky enough to get onto the system before it became fully subscribed. As we know, there are literally thousands of people who cannot get access to the service, when they were assured by the former Labor government that they could—people like the Dysons, who relocated their educational software business to just outside Goulburn.

They confirmed that satellite internet was available through the NBN before their move. They had no idea that this service would become fully subscribed. Only after their move, and the remodelling of their premises to support their business, did they discover that they just could not access the service. In desperation, and to avoid substantial losses, they have leased new premises and relocated their business to a town centre. They are the victims of the former Labor government's mismanagement.

Australia has always suffered from the 'tyranny of distance', and as an export focused and outward-looking country we have always been unbelievably innovative in how we have addressed this tyranny. Again, there are some smart thinkers out there who are trying to bridge the gaps left by Labor's failed policy. In Harden, the community is establishing infrastructure for fixed wireless across the town and beyond. This is being achieved through a private contractor and coordinated locally, delivering speeds of up to 100 megabits per second or faster, and data transfer within the town is free. The whole service is provided from a container on a hill just outside Harden, and is linked into the Melbourne-Sydney fibre backbone.

Another business in my electorate, Yless4U, provides fixed wireless services on the outskirts of Canberra and is operated by locals Anne and Anthony Goonan. They saw an opportunity—a gap in services provided—and they jumped in. We need more entrepreneurs like them, and an NBN that accepts and encourages these entrepreneurs.

The Labor Party proposed an NBN that was city-centric and that ignored the biggest problems in Australia's telecommunications—those in regional areas. Our plan will solve the real problems for Australian telecommunications. It encourages network competition, it is matching technologies to locations and it is prioritised to those parts of Australia that need it most, like my electorate of Hume. I am delighted that as part of this reprioritisation the NBN recently announced a fixed wireless rollout plan in the Goulburn region. This will be a big step forward, and I look forward to similar announcements in other nearby regions. Thank you.