



Speech by

## Evan Moorhead

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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### BROADBAND

**Mr MOORHEAD** (Waterford—ALP) (11.53 am): Australia is looking for a government that can build a nation, with infrastructure that will promote economic growth and productivity improvements well beyond the commodities boom. Australia has fallen behind many other countries in the provision of a high-speed broadband network. The information and communications technology industry contributes about six per cent of Australia's gross domestic product which is more than the mining industry. Some estimates credit ICT innovation and capability, with up to 80 per cent of productivity gains in Australia in the past 10 years.

A high-speed broadband network is not simply about giving people quicker download times when they are looking for the latest football scores on the internet. Faster broadband means that businesses can communicate and exchange with suppliers, customers, government and, for larger businesses, other parts of the same company.

That is why any plan for broadband must be a long-term plan. High-speed business and government service bandwidth is doubling in Australia every 18 months. That is why it is so disappointing that the federal government's broadband proposal is so short-sighted. While this proposal may provide 12 megabits per second bandwidth in the short term, it does not have the ability to continue to expand to meet the demands of a growing business sector. Building for our future means that we need a broadband network that can move to 50 megabits per second and beyond.

Like most other policies from the federal government, short-term political opportunism has won out over nation building—a chance to build economic infrastructure with dividends for all Australians has been sorely missed. When it comes to Queensland, the state with the most dispersed population in Australia, large geographical areas will be serviced by wireless technology under the federal government's proposal. The telecommunications industry has raised serious concerns about whether this technology will be able to provide such a service. As well, I am sure the cost of broadband in the bush will soon outstrip the \$2,750 broadband subsidy proposed.

The federal government has been in such a rush to be seen to be doing something about this that it has risked crulling the pitch for future development by granting almost \$1 billion to the Opel consortium to start work on its half-baked proposal. This lack of forward planning and vision for the future, a hallmark of the federal government, is in stark contrast to the nation-building proposal for a new national broadband network put forward by Kevin Rudd. The fundamental difference is that the Rudd policy provides a long-term plan to promote and meet demand from business. As well as business, this policy will also make telemedicine and videoconferencing a reality for more and more people. The fibre to the node network proposed by federal Labor has the potential to go well beyond 12 megabits per second to be upscaled to 50 megabits per second and maybe more.

The federal government has done nothing for the last 11 years. It has put up a short-term option at the last minute. Kevin Rudd has brought a visionary, nation-building proposal to the Australian people before the election. The contrast could not be clearer. This is not simply a matter for those in the bush. This affects the people in my electorate. The people of Bethania currently cannot get broadband access because of the poor infrastructure and lack of investment by this federal government. When they sought

advice from the federal member about the lack of infrastructure, the advice they got from the federal government was, 'You should buy wireless broadband.' That is simply not going to cut it for people who are trying to study, run businesses or use technology to move forward. It is about time there was some decent investment in broadband in this country. I think Kevin Rudd and Labor can do it.