



Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

National Broadband Network

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (12.23 pm): Today I rise to talk about communications, particularly the national broadband network. We know the old cliché that we are the lucky country. If that is the case, if we are the lucky country, why are we one of the poorest when it comes to internet connection? Why is our communications one of the worst? In the latest internet speed report, Australia has dropped to 60th position in the world, well behind the international pack. The rating drop has happened because over a period a number of other countries are moving towards fibre based networks. The federal Liberal National Party government's position to switch from fibre to the home to a mixed fibre-copper network is part of the reason for the decline. Under the prior Labor government, we were moving towards an all-fibre based network, which is what most of our competitors are now doing and what consumers want.

The top 10 countries for average connection speeds are: No. 1 South Korea, No. 2 Hong Kong, No. 3 Japan, No. 4 Switzerland, No. 5 Sweden, No. 6 Netherlands, No. 7 Ireland—even the Irish are better than us—No. 8 Latvia, No. 9 Czechoslovakia and No. 10 Singapore. Even Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Spain and New Zealand have faster speeds than ours. Malcolm Turnbull, a former minister for communications and now Prime Minister, carries the legacy for this disgraceful mess.

Abbott as prime minister and Turnbull as the then minister for communications proposed a faster, cheaper model, instead of offering optical fibre direct to Australian homes. We now see NBN largely rolled out to street nodes, with the final connection to residents made through the existing copper network. Initially, the coalition claimed a new NBN would cost \$29.5 billion, as opposed to Labor's \$44.9 billion, and would deliver speeds of 25 megabytes per second to the country by 2016, which would be well ahead of Labor's scheme. We now know the cost of the scheme has blown out to \$56 billion. It is not expected to be finished until 2020, which is more than four years behind schedule.

The residents in Ferny Grove, which takes in parts of the federal electorates of Dickson and Ryan, are only able to reach internet connections during a full moon, when a westerly wind is blowing. I have spoken to the honourable members for Pine Rivers and Kallangur, who have indicated similar stories of connection problems in their electorates. This is not unique to Ferny Grove. That is why my office has been receiving copious complaints from constituents in the federal seats of Ryan and Dickson.

On 5 February this year, a family moved into Upper Kedron having lived in Canada for 12 years. Before moving, they checked with Telstra about broadband coverage and were told that their proposed home would be covered. They signed up for a 1,000-gigabyte account. In January, they had the internet connected only to be told by Telstra that their coverage did not extend to the house. Instead, they were offered a 3G connection at 25 gigabytes. That is not enough for a family of six. The family has been told that there are no plans to upgrade the network.

In Arana Hills, Mr Brown was receiving a 11.5-megabyte download speed. Today, on the same network and with the same provider, Mr Brown is receiving a four-megabyte download speed. His ISP has explained that the network is now at its maximum subscription and there are no plans to improve service as the NBN is coming in. However, Arana Hills is not slated for rollout until 2019 and, even then, it is cable to the home.

Dickson resident Bill McKeever, who lives at Mount Glorious, has discovered that the fibre-optic cable is already running past his home, but even under the Turnbull government's NBN plan, when Mount Glorious receives its version of the NBN it will not include any fibre or even cable options. Wireless is the best option and the best outcome for Mount Glorious. It is all they can hope for, despite the existing cable running past Mr McKeever's home.

A proper NBN is the national highway system of the 21st century. Without adequate investment that includes expansive capacity, there is little hope that the billions being spent will sufficiently meet the needs of Queensland or Australia in the coming decades. Working from home reduces the stress on our roads and improves the quality of our lives. Many more constituents, particularly in the federal seat of Dickson, choose to operate their businesses from home. To use the internet for work today requires what the current NBN is promising. What about the jobs for tomorrow? Should not we be planning for them? Do it once and do it right. Upgrade the technology at the home and in the exchange, not through the cabling in between. There is only one thing to do and that is to bring this federal government into the 21st century, throw them out and vote Labor—

(Time expired)