



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

**NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK
FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY BILL 2010**

Second Reading

SPEECH

Monday, 15 November 2010

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Perrett, Graham, MP

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Mr PERRETT (Moreton) (8.16 pm)—I rise to voice my opposition to the Orwellian named National Broadband Network Financial Transparency Bill 2010. I do so in full realisation that in my three years as a member of parliament this is the first bill I have ever spoken against. I am also a little disappointed that the member for Wentworth has used this place for a political point-scoring exercise rather than for true cooperative governance. Other members have used the improved private members opportunities to bring about constructive reforms—like the member for Dennison's, achieved through the Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Bill 2010, a bill that I proudly supported. However, unfortunately, this bill is more of a political muckraker.

Nevertheless, you have got to feel for the member for Wentworth—normally a constructive, cooperative, progressive and technologically savvy member of this House, but that was before he took on the job of opposition spokesperson for communications, aka the NBN wrecker. He claims this bill is not about delay, but we all remember the commission he was given by the opposition leader, the member for Warringah: 'Go forth, Malcolm, and destroy the NBN.' Like a thief in the night, the member for Wentworth comes with his wrecking ball, this bill, to destroy and kill the National Broadband Network.

We have a Leader of the Opposition, a self-confessed technophobe, who, when he hears about a broadband approaching, looks to the heavens and reaches for his raincoat. At the moment there are people at home downloading TV shows and movies, but the member for Warringah goes home to his video machine to watch *Weekend at Bernie's*—and it is on a beta video recorder; not even a VHS. No-one expects politicians to be experts at everything, even though some of us probably claim to be from time to time. Not you, of course, Deputy Speaker Vamvakinou, although I know that you are an expert at many things. But you do not need to understand the technology to understand how important high-speed broadband is for bringing the bush closer to essential services, for increasing productivity, for the economy, for new global business opportunities, for e-health—and the list goes on.

You do not need to be Bill Gates or a tech-head to understand how important this infrastructure is to Australia's future; you just need to be a good listener. If the member for Wentworth and the Leader of the Opposition would listen, they would understand how valuable this national broadband network is now and into the future. They would appreciate the revolution that high-speed broadband will bring to households, that it will bring to businesses, that it will bring to schools and hospitals—whether the hospital is in Brisbane or Barcaldine or anywhere in the bush in between.

There is no escaping the fact that this is a major, once-in-a-generation infrastructure build. There is no escaping the fact that there is a significant cost involved in delivering this kind of infrastructure, but it is well worth it. There are, of course, significant costs involved because, apart from our east coast, Australia is a very sparsely populated continent. In fact, Australia as a nation is ranked 233 on the population density scale. That is alongside countries like the Western Sahara and Greenland.

But the tyranny of distance did not stop us from delivering road and rail. They were big challenges from two centuries ago. Similarly, when it comes to broadband we have distance in front of us but we can overcome it. It has not stopped Australians from delivering phone lines and neither should it stop us from delivering a world-class, high-speed broadband network.

If anything, Australia's remoteness compels us to build the National Broadband Network. That is where we will increase productivity. When we look at the changeover in productivity from when the Rudd government came to power, we are looking at productivity of zero. Anyone who understands economics knows that that is no way to build the jobs of the future.

Mr Hunt—That is not correct. It is not true.

Mr PERRETT—It is. In the quarter that was handed over in 2007 productivity was at zero.

Mr Hunt—The average over—

Mr PERRETT—No, the quarter; I am talking about the quarter when it was handed over. I am therefore compelled to oppose this bill. Not only will the NBN finally get the bush and regional Australia connected to business opportunities around the world; residents on the city fringe, like those just outside my electorate who are currently denied broadband access—perhaps in the member for Bonner's electorate—will have world-class broadband. The NBN will deliver 93 per cent of premises with optical fibre with up to one gigabyte per second, and the remaining seven per cent will be connected with the next generation wireless and satellite technology. I urge those opposite to get on board with this fantastic once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.