



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

National Broadband Network

SPEECH

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BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker King, Catherine, MP

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Ms KING (Ballarat—Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport and Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing) (10:51): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, and congratulations for being in the chair. I represent an electorate where the rollout of the NBN is quickly gaining momentum. The foundations of Australia's telecommunications network were laid over 100 years ago. While they may have served us well then, if we do not modernise our ICT infrastructure we are at risk of strangling our economy. That is why I am very pleased that my community has been given a head start. At the eastern end of my electorate, in Bacchus Marsh, work on delivering high-speed broadband began last November. Just as that work was beginning I was also able to announce that Ballarat Central was among the latest new sites in Victoria where work on providing high-speed broadband would begin in the next two months.

In addition to these initiatives benefiting Bacchus Marsh and Ballarat Central, work to deliver fixed wireless broadband in areas around Ballarat was confirmed and planning is well underway. Just last week, the Prime Minister and the minister for broadband announced a \$620 million investment by the government in the construction of two new broadband satellites to ensure the three per cent of Australians who live in remote Australia are not left behind in terms of this new technology.

The NBN is about building a stronger economy. It is about driving productivity and ensuring that the nation is equipped with the infrastructure we need to grow and prosper well into the 21st century. We are committed to seeing that the entire nation is equipped with the broadband infrastructure we need for the long-term future of our economy, and only one party is guaranteeing equivalent levels of service for broadband in regional, rural and remote areas.

Lack of access to high-speed broadband is one of the issues that is constantly raised with me wherever I go in my electorate. During visits to schools in my electorate I hear how the high-speed broadband delivered by the NBN will change the way students access information and schools communicate with each other. Our universities know how the NBN will provide opportunities for collaborative learning approaches between institutions both within the region and the nation with their counterparts internationally. The already excellent health care facilities in Ballarat will be enhanced even further with the NBN, enabling video consultations, remote and real-time diagnosis of tests and scans and the high-speed secure transfer of medical imaging and patient records. There are significant business opportunities as well, as the NBN will open up Ballarat businesses to international markets.

I do not want my region left behind when it comes to the delivery of the fastest and most efficient communications that we can have. There will be challenges in our community as this rollout occurs—I acknowledge and understand that—particularly with the fixed wireless network. It is very important that NBN Co. gets community consultations right and operates with the highest level of transparency whether it is the proponent of local planning applications or one of the potential and users. As a community we should expect nothing less. The NBN is a vital piece of infrastructure for our community and having the NBN in place before other regions offers us a significant competitive advantage. It is certainly an advantage that we welcome in Ballarat.