



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Corio Electorate: National Broadband Network**

**SPEECH**

Wednesday, 13 May 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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| <b>Questioner</b>                  | <b>Responder</b>    |
| <b>Speaker</b> Marles, Richard, MP | <b>Question No.</b> |

**Mr MARLES** (Corio) (19:44): Like the member for O'Connor, I am awaiting eagerly what the Abbott government has in store for the rollout of the NBN to people in my electorate of Corio. It is certainly good news to hear that the people of Esperance and Denmark will enjoy the rollout of the NBN in their towns.

I have to say, though, it seems that the children on the outskirts of Geelong by comparison have been completely forgotten by the Abbott government. Students at Geelong Baptist College and the new grade 5 campus at Kardinia International College are missing out on vital internet based education because of the coalition's second-rate National Broadband Network rollout plan. It is a plan which effectively cuts parts of Geelong's connection to the world.

These students are prevented from accessing the same benefits that other Australian schools receive from internet based educational programs. Neil Wetmore, the principal of Geelong Baptist College, described the situation as exclusive, limiting and unfair. He said: 'If we are in a digital revolution, if that's the trend of our time, then we at Geelong Baptist College are not in it. Our students do not have access to the wealth of information that other students have access to.' The IT teachers at Geelong Baptist College report that the learning environment is challenging for both students and teachers. Teachers often have to change their lesson plans because the internet is slow and unreliable, and students regularly have to waste time in class waiting for programs and videos to load.

By comparison, as we have just heard, many government and non-government schools around Australia who are fortunate enough to be able to connect to fast broadband are enjoying internet access that is quick and efficient. For example, schoolchildren are able to participate in competitive online study tutorials. They have videoconferencing systems where students can engage with guest speakers from around the world via Skype. IT students at Geelong Baptist College are being seriously disadvantaged compared to other students because internet programs often drop out and students have to wait five to 10 minutes for their page to connect again. So, while other students enjoy the benefits of the 21st century, Geelong Baptist College students are left to fight the discriminatory weight of the coalition's 'fraudband' network.

The coalition promised in their 2013 election policy that 'under the coalition's NBN all premises will have access to download speeds of 25mbps to 100mbps by the end of 2016'. But its latest corporate plan now indicates that the Minister for Communications' second-rate NBN will not be completed until December 2020. The minister promised: 'We will give highest priority to the suburbs, towns and regions with the poorest broadband services today'. He promised that 'addressing underserviced areas first is a key objective of our NBN policy'. But is this happening? It is certainly not happening on the outskirts of Geelong.

Geelong students are operating on an internet speed that is two steps up from the old telephone network. Not only is the NBN not happening for Geelong now, but this does not even seem to be an issue big enough to warrant any immediate future government planning. Geelong is not listed in the government's 18 month rollout plan. If there is a queue for the government's NBN, Geelong is not in it.

Under the former Labor government NBN Co had begun work on the fibre network in Geelong. Work was scheduled to deliver fibre to about 44,000 schools, homes and businesses in Geelong and surrounds—including Lovely Banks, which is the home to Geelong Baptist College and the grade 5 campus at Kardinia International College. This work was scheduled to be completed by late 2015. But the coalition cancelled this rollout.

Despite promising to honour all contracts prior to the election, Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull have cancelled the fibre rollout to Geelong. Under the former Labor government the NBN was universal and fair; all schools, as well as homes and businesses, in the fixed line footprint were to get world-class fibre-to-the-premises broadband. But under the coalition the NBN has become fundamentally unfair and discriminatory.

The coalition promised a faster rollout that would be delivered to all Australians by 2016. They have failed to deliver. And who are the victims of the coalition's failed rollout? Primary and high school students. The

government needs to make good on its promise to the Australian people and remedy this situation immediately. In the meantime it is the students at Geelong Baptist College and Kardinia College grade 5 campus who are paying the price for the Abbott government's complete incompetence.