

Hon Kate Doust; Hon Liz Behjat; Hon Lynn MacLaren; Hon Mia Davies; President; Hon Jon Ford; Hon Simon O'Brien; Deputy President; Hon Ken Travers; Hon Ed Dermer; Hon Helen Morton

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## NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK — EXPANSION

*Motion*

**HON KATE DOUST (South Metropolitan — Deputy Leader of the Opposition)** [10.13 am] — without notice: I move —

That this house calls on the Barnett government to endorse the expansion of the national broadband network proposed by the Gillard government to support business, industry and residential users across the state, giving them high-speed internet access while at the same time avoiding the construction of numerous unsightly wireless towers in residential areas.

I think that this is an important day on which to raise this issue. Hon Liz Behjat raised it the other night: people go to the polls on Saturday to make an important decision about the future of this country. They will make that decision based on a whole range of issues that they take into account. One issue that has gained a lot of ground in various electorates concerns broadband. Therefore, I thought it was imperative to raise it because what we have heard from the state government on this issue has been deafening silence. Not only did the state government shut down the state broadband program a couple of years ago, but also any time that we have raised the issue of the government's level of support for broadband in this place, a set of weasel words has come back to us about what the government is doing. Given that we go to the polls on Saturday and that broadband will be such a vital issue for Western Australia, it is imperative that the state government comes out of the closet, breaks its silence and endorses the federal government's broadband proposals.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Are you saying it is the same area of jurisdiction?

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Eighty minutes is dedicated to this debate. Members do have a chance to participate; it cannot be monopolised by one or another member, so I ask members to wait their turn and we will hear from everybody in turn.

**Hon KATE DOUST:** The broadband issue is not just an information technology issue; it is a major infrastructure program. The federal government proposes to spend \$43 billion to roll out this massive and significant change for all Australians. This change will impact on people in their homes, businesses, education and heavy industry. It will impact on our capacity to trade with other countries. It will put us on a much more competitive level with countries such as Japan and Singapore, which already have a much better high-speed broadband system available to them than we have.

A fantastic aspect of this election campaign is that the federal government has named the second rollout of the national broadband network in this state. Broadband had already been announced earlier this year for that very vital area leading up to Geraldton to support the Square Kilometre Array project. In fact, I went to the rollout of the cable for Geraldton in late May with federal minister Stephen Conroy and the newly minted state minister responsible, Mr Bill Marmion. What I was so pleased about at that rollout in that paddock in Gingin on that day was that Minister Bill Marmion got to his feet and said to Stephen Conroy, "Minister, we support what you're doing—bring it on! Roll it out all the way up to Darwin. What can we do to help you?" I very cheekily put a question on notice the following Tuesday asking whether the minister supports the federal government's rollout of broadband. The response was a set of weasel words that effectively denied what he had said, so I was very confused. Does the state government support the federal government's broadband network rollout or not? We need the state government to come out today and say, yes, this is the plan that will take the country forward and put us on an equal footing with the rest of the world, which is already connecting fibre to homes and businesses.

Until a week ago we had two options. The federal Labor government said that it would roll out the broadband network and change the world; it would bring fibre to people's homes so that they can do a whole range of things, which I will go through later. The federal opposition said that if it was elected, it would shut the program down and we would not have it; it would turn the lights off. We will not have that equal playing field and access to all that information if the federal opposition is elected because it will shut it down. However, a week ago the federal opposition obviously did some polling and decided that people want the broadband network. I know people want it because that is what they tell me out in the electorate. When I go into my electorate of South Metropolitan Region—I am sure members can all talk about the same thing in their own electorates—people say that they want this change. People in Rivervale, Wilson, Victoria Park, Willagee and a range of other places are desperate to get this national broadband network in. We now see that the federal opposition has come up with a bandaid approach and have said, "Sure, we'll put some broadband in. We'll have a range of things. We're going to stick up thousands and thousands of mobile phone towers and that's how we're going to do it." Yesterday, I stood under a mobile phone tower with the federal minister, just to see what it was like. They are really ugly things! I am sure people throughout our community, both metropolitan and regional, do not want thousands and

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thousands of these towers; they want underground cable to their homes and businesses because it is safe, effective and efficient.

Our community will derive many benefits from a national broadband network, such as higher productivity and the creation of thousands of jobs, and if we consider education, children will be able to have enhanced broadband internet access and be able to operate in an almost virtual schoolroom. I went to the Australian Computer Society and Australian Information Industry Association forum yesterday, which was attended by a couple of hundred people, where this issue was talked about. Of course, those organisations are passionate about broadband because they see the benefits. One of the speakers talked about a teacher in a particular school who wanted the children to learn about Korea, and so a virtual classroom was created with a group of students in Korea as though the children were actually in that classroom. I thought that was an amazing situation. When most of us went through school we had never heard of computers and we never would have contemplated mobile phones—some members probably would not even have had remote controls for the television! How times have moved on.

The introduction and rollout of broadband is one of those rare, significant changes that will move us forward, and it has been compared with other significant changes. I imagine there was a lot of opposition when C.Y. O'Connor wanted to roll out the pipeline to Kalgoorlie or when copper wiring was first rolled out to houses for the installation of telephone lines, but everyone dealt with it and accepted the great benefits. We are saying that this change will help us take that quantum leap forward into the future. It will add value to the education system and businesses, and businesses are saying, "Bring it on! We want to be able to order online; we want to be able to promote our businesses overseas faster and better." Through e-health, people in remote or rural locations will be able to speak to their specialists, psychiatrists, doctors or nurses via high-definition videoconferencing. I have seen examples of this happening, and it is quite amazing that people will be able to do that. It means they will save time and money by not having to leave their homes and travel from far-flung places to the city to receive the information and advice they need. These are great benefits.

I referred to another benefit for Western Australia earlier—that is, the Square Kilometre Array project. That is a vitally important project for our state, and it has had full support across the political spectrum because we all understand the benefits not just for Western Australia and Australia, but also for the rest of the world. But for that to happen, we need the broadband rollout. A forum was held at Parliament House earlier this week that included a briefing on where we are at with the SKA, and comments were made that it is vital to have this rollout otherwise difficulties could be caused in the decision-making process and the delivery of the SKA to our state. When we look at other happenings in our state that back up the SKA, there is the development of the Pawsey Centre at the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation in Kensington, and a range of high-impact computer centres are being set up to prepare for that great decision that will, hopefully, go our way. Unless we have proper systems in place to support those operations, they will all fall away. It is essential.

Geraldton has decided it wants to be a smart grid town—it wants to be a town of the future—and the broadband rollout is vital, otherwise that cannot happen. The Minister for Energy is sitting over there—broadband is important for his portfolio. We have talked about smart meters in this chamber; imagine if people could go online and check the price of the cheapest power at a particular time of day because they had access to great broadband internet service.

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** That sounds great!

**Hon KATE DOUST:** They would be able to save themselves money. It might be a solution to lowering the cost of power for people in this state, if the minister would say that the federal Labor government's proposal for broadband will help utility costs in Western Australia because people will be able to pick and choose online.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Is this a bit like their GroceryChoice thing? That was a great success!

**Hon KATE DOUST:** I know the Minister for Transport is a bit of Luddite, but maybe he will have his opportunity in due course.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Ooh—we're getting personal!

**Hon KATE DOUST:** The opportunity is here for major and significant change to education, health, industry, small business, energy—every aspect of our lives, including our home lives. I look at how my children utilise information technology for both recreational and educational use. We need to support these decisions so that our children and their children, as we move down the generations, will be able to access and use this amazing facility that can change lives.

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There has been some interesting debate about this issue and today *The West Australian* has quite an interesting juxtaposition of articles, one by Paul Murray—I have given up reading his articles—and an excellent article by Hon Mal Bryce, chairman of iVEC. Mal has written, in very simple and plain terms, about why we need to have broadband and why we need to have it rolled out to put us in the best place with the rest of the world, so that we can compete, we can be more productive, we can create jobs, and we can have access to better information. At the forum I attended yesterday somebody said that, in terms of education, not only will it open up the opportunity for children with things such as that virtual classroom, but if people want to do a university course they will not just be restricted to what is in this state or nation, they will be able to pick and choose the best lectures or the best courses anywhere in the world because they will be able to access them through the internet. But they will only be able to do that if they have the best service available through the rollout of the broadband network that the Labor federal government is proposing, not the proposal of the federal Liberal Party, which is a bandaid approach that will not work. The people I have spoken to have said, “Listen, if we are going to do this, let’s do it well. Let’s do it properly once and for all so that we get the best outcome for our families, communities and businesses. Let’s not take a bandaid approach.”

We are asking the government today to get on board and acknowledge that sometimes we have to accept change and we have to just roll it out. The information and communication technologies industry has said repeatedly that this is vital for change. The ICT industry is crying out for this Liberal state government to recognise it and to provide the same level of support to it by saying that it is as vital an industry for this state to generate jobs and income and money back into the state as the resources sector—in fact, they work hand in hand. The ICT industry wants this government to come on board and say that the federal Labor government’s proposal is the way to go. It is desperate for the rollout of the broadband proposals, and it wants it to happen. Yesterday I said, “Fine; we will move this, and we’ll see if the state Liberal government is prepared to come on board.” We have not had that kind of feedback from it. Although we hear it talk about the need to have it, it will not stump up and say, “This is the best option. This is the way forward. Let’s get the fibre to homes; let’s get the fibre to businesses; let’s just get on with it.” The state Liberal government has stayed silent; it has not come out and endorsed it; it is in a wait-and-see-and-watch motion.

**Hon Norman Moore:** What about the mining tax; do you endorse that?

**Hon KATE DOUST:** Yes, I do; I think Western Australia should get a better bang for its buck in this state, and I am happy to say that. I look forward to the Leader of the House’s response, because I imagine he is one of those people still learning how to use his remote control, and broadband would be a novelty for him!

**Hon Simon O’Brien:** Is he a Luddite as well!

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Let’s raise the debate above personal observations about people and get back to the substance of the issue.

**Hon KATE DOUST:** People need to consider this issue, and a lot of people—such as some of those people who attended that forum yesterday—who would normally be fairly conservative in their political views came away from that forum realising that if they really want broadband, because they see the benefit to their business, they will vote Labor this Saturday. Last night I went to a forum in my electorate. It was not a forum at which I expected broadband to be raised, but it was certainly raised a number of times. People are curious about it. They want to know how it will benefit them. They want to know when it is going to happen. They want to know when their children will be able to get better access to the internet. Some of them want to know when they are going to get access to the internet at all! They see Labor’s national broadband rollout as filling the gap for them. It will provide them with the best service they can possibly get. I know that one of the Nationals candidates, Tony Crook, made comments in the newspaper last week about not just rolling it out to Kalgoorlie and Boulder, but taking it even further. I take it from those comments that the National Party supports the federal Labor government’s rollout of broadband. I would hope that is the case, because they would appreciate the benefits to their constituencies in rural and remote areas.

**Hon Mia Davies** interjected.

**Hon KATE DOUST:** But it will indeed. I am happy to show the member the maps showing where it will be rolled out. In fact, based on Bill Marmion’s call to roll it out from here to Darwin, the federal government has agreed to do that. According to the road map, broadband will be rolled out all around Australia. Where it cannot be rolled out via fibre cable, it will be provided by satellite. Only 300 000 people outside the grid area will need satellite, and those are the people living right in the centre of Australia where a grid will go up anyway.

**Hon Simon O’Brien** interjected.

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**Hon KATE DOUST:** The member is so loud sometimes and so rude.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** You're so pathetic!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Let us do without the interjections. I am sure that any further speakers in this debate will want to proceed without interjections, so let us make the rules apply to everyone.

**Hon KATE DOUST:** In my final few minutes, I want to quote from Mal Bryce's article in *The West Australian* today. He starts by saying —

If the nation misses yet another chance to get high-speed broadband, ... we will slip off the global stage

I think that is a very apt comment. He goes on to say —

By 2008, more than 180 economies worldwide had launched broadband services. Globally, the number of subscribers had surpassed 500 million (including fixed and mobile broadband subscribers). We are involved in a race for economic survival.

That is at the heart of it. If this state government is committed to moving this state forward in an economic sense and providing that flow-on benefit back into the community, it should publicly endorse what the federal Labor government is seeking to do in rolling out broadband not just in the other parts of the country, but here. It will be rolled out next year in Victoria Park, Mandurah and Geraldton; that is the starting point. I know that the people who live in Victoria Park, Mandurah and Geraldton certainly appreciate that, because they understand the benefits. Certainly, the information and communications technology industry understands the benefits. The health industry, the community and those in education will appreciate the benefits. This will be a win-win situation for everyone in the state. All it needs is for the state government to say, "Yes, we think this is a good idea. Yes, we support it." The government should stop hiding behind things and address the issues.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Did you read Paul Murray's article in the same paper?

**Hon KATE DOUST:** I will not read Paul Murray's stuff.

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** But Mal Bryce is independent!

**Hon KATE DOUST:** Mal Bryce is highly qualified in this area and is passionate about this area, and has been for all his working life, and knows the benefit to this state that will arise from the rollout of broadband. I do not think that the alternative view is the one that will benefit this state.

This is a wonderful opportunity. It is a shame that we cannot get the state government to support members of the Western Australian community, both in their homes and in their businesses, to benefit those families who want great internet access. Once this plan is rolled out, 93 per cent of homes in Australia will have access to fibre, to better internet and to all the information that they can gain. This is a major positive change that will put us back on the world stage. It will open up so many doors. It is a shame that we have a state government—I know that I have talked about this before—that does not give the same level of credence to the science and innovation area. This rollout of broadband is important right across the economic spectrum. It will aid every type of business in our state. It will make them more productive and it will enable them to be competitive on the world stage. We are not hearing the right vibe coming from either the minister or this government to support the proposal that is in hand—in fact, the proposal is already happening. This proposal will allow full internet access to all these homes at a lower price in a period of time that will put us on the world stage and provide great benefits. All we are asking today is that the state Liberal government endorse the plan that the federal Labor government has put forward that will be of great benefit. If people genuinely want to see broadband rolled out, I suggest that they vote for Labor on Saturday.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I am looking for one speaker, not 17. The question is that the motion be agreed to.

**HON LIZ BEHJAT (North Metropolitan)** [10.35 am]: I am delighted to speak on this motion today, but I do not think that Hon Kate Doust is going to hear from my mouth the words that she wants to hear. She is asking us to support the Gillard government's rollout of the national broadband network—I do not think so. She forgot to mention the \$43 billion cost. What will be the cost of this rollout? It will cost \$43 billion—and that is the conservative estimate. Even the chief executive officer of the national broadband network company—NBN Co Ltd—Mr Quigley, says that he cannot guarantee that \$43 billion will be the final cost. What would members rather support—a \$43 billion project that might blow out to double that figure or the coalition's election policy that gives choice through public and private partnerships at a cost of \$6.3 billion whereby people around

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Australia will have a choice in how to access the internet? Members opposite talk about the fantastic speeds that might be available, but at what cost will these fantastic speeds be available?

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** At the moment on my home computer, I get 4.3 megabytes per second. Under the coalition's policy, there will be a minimum guarantee of 12 megabytes per second. That is three times the speed of my home computer now. Do I want it to be any faster on my home computer? No, I do not. Others may want it to be faster, and that will be available by choice.

Let us look at the cost. Last night on *Lateline* Stephen Conroy and Tony Smith talked about national broadband. Stephen Conroy did not want to talk about the cost involved. Members have spoken about the other countries that have national broadband. Let us talk about Japan and Singapore, and about the size of those countries and their population densities. Members opposite cannot have it both ways. I do not think the Labor government wants to have population density because it wants to close the borders and not allow any more people to come here. It wants to keep Australia sustainable, yet it wants to have high-speed broadband. In Singapore, the cost of providing the infrastructure was about \$200 per household. In New Zealand, another small country—let us not forget the size of Australia—it was about \$330 per household. What do we expect the cost to be in Australia per household—\$200 or \$330? No; it will be \$4 000 per household just so that people can have 100 megabytes per second if they want it.

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! I do not want Hon Liz Behjat to feel that she has to raise her voice over the crowd. Let us not have the crowd all wanting to talk at once.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Of course, no cost-benefit analysis has been done on this project by Treasury because it is frightened; it is running away from the figures, as it always does. Supposedly, this will increase the speed beyond our wildest imagination. Do members know what it will increase beyond their wildest imagination? It will increase government debt beyond their wildest imagination—and nothing more. That cost of \$4 000 per household is to provide the network. There is also the cost of delivery to the household. The estimated cost of delivery to the household is \$10 per person per month. But this is before the internet service provider cost for the download. So, yes, high speed internet will be available for everyone. But who will be able to afford to pick it up? Will it be those people whom the opposition is always talking about—the people who are struggling under debt at the moment? I ask members opposite seriously: do they want to put those people under more debt, as Labor governments always do? The federal government is very good at big talk. Let us look at some of the hallmark things the federal government has done. FuelWatch! GroceryChoice! Home insulation! Do we really want to put these people in charge of the national broadband network? I do not think so! Why will this promise be any different? Is Peter Garrett going to be the minister responsible for the national broadband network? God forbid he should get his hands on any of that fibre optic stuff! Imagine what he would be able to do with that!

The argument has been put that hospitals should have access to fibre optics so that they can provide e-health. I agree. That is what we will do under the coalition policy. We will provide choice. If people want to provide e-health in hospitals and internet access in schools, we will put the fibre optic network in place in those areas. But do we really want to roll out fibre optic cable under the highway between Perth and Port Hedland? There is never going to be any infrastructure there. There are never going to be any houses or any businesses there. But there will be a damn good fibre optic cable running under the road!

The federal government has said that it will be able to deliver the national broadband network to 93 per cent of Australian households. What about the seven per cent of Australian households that are going to miss out? Where will they be? I am sure my friends in this chamber from the Nationals will let us know where they will be. They will be households in rural and regional Western Australia. They will be the ones that will miss out.

It is all very well for the federal government to use Western Australia as Labor's cash cow. That is what Western Australia is. Do not forget it. Western Australia is Labor's cash cow. The federal government wants to rip all the money out of Western Australia and take it to the east coast. It wants to forget about Western Australia. The seven per cent of households that will be left out will be in Western Australia. There is no doubt about that. We can be guaranteed that that is what will happen. Western Australia will miss out yet again. It will also be the mining companies that will miss out yet again. Let us not forget the mining tax. The federal government wants to rip some more money from the mining companies. But it does not want to give them access to the national broadband network. It cannot possibly do that!

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Last night, Stephen Conroy was crowing about the fact that Tasmania now has access to the national broadband network. Tasmania! Look at the size of Tasmania, and look at the size of Western Australia! How is the federal government ever going to be able to do that in Western Australia?

Several members interjected.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** What has this state government done? We know that adequate and affordable telecommunications services are critical to the ongoing economic and social development of Western Australia. The Western Australian government is identifying gaps and opportunities so that it can provide solutions. The Western Australian government is looking at the overall picture. Members opposite talked about mobile phone towers. We already have mobile phone towers. But we need more of them. Wireless towers are needed everywhere where Western Australians want to use their mobile phones. This is a very pertinent matter this week in particular. Go and speak to the people of Gracetown. Ask them what they want. Do they want very fast internet broadband, or would they prefer to have better mobile phone coverage? Gracetown is in a shadow area when it comes to mobile phone coverage. What happened this week? People in Gracetown could not get mobile phone coverage to help that poor man who lost his life this week. Internet broadband would not have done anything to save him. But better mobile phone coverage may have done. That is what we need to be looking at. That is exactly what the state government is looking at.

Several members interjected.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** Squawking! Squawking!

**The PRESIDENT:** Order!

Several members interjected.

**Hon LIZ BEHJAT:** It may not have been appropriate for me to make that comment, but it is not fast broadband that is needed in Gracetown.

In the recent state budget, the government allocated \$40 million to a regional mobile communications project; and, in partnering with the private sector—which we do very well—that will change the viability of service delivery. But it will not be the taxpayers who will pick up the bill. That will be done by private industry.

Just to wrap up in the couple of minutes I have left, I reiterate that what we need to look at here, not only for Western Australia but for the whole of Australia, is what is affordable. We do not need to be plunged any further into debt by this incompetent federal government. On Saturday, when the people of Australia go to the polls, they will be thinking very, very long and hard about what party they will vote for. Actually, I will not be thinking very long and very hard about it at all. I know that I am going to be voting Liberal, to ensure that we get the coalition back in government in Canberra and so that it can take charge of the economy once again and so that it can pay off debt and get the economy back into surplus, as it has done previously. We do not want any more of this Gillard \$43 billion-plus plan for Australia. No, thank you very much. The Barnett government will not support that. The people of Western Australia will not support that. We are in favour of spending \$6 billion to give people choice, provided through public and private partnerships. No more of Gillard's debt. Thank you very much.

**HON LYNN MacLAREN (South Metropolitan) [10.45 am]:** I rise to speak in support of the motion. I am very concerned that our state government is not supporting this proposal by the federal government to provide this very important, long-term telecommunications infrastructure in this state. This is a gift from the federal government to provide this essential infrastructure. I think it is very short-sighted of this government to not perceive this as a once only opportunity to take us into the future. I am very disappointed about this backward looking proposal that the federal coalition has put up. This proposal has been described by a colleague of mine as "Bits of wire held together by pieces of string". That is the counter proposal that the Tony Abbott team has given us.

This proposal for a national broadband network has been examined by a Senate inquiry. That inquiry has put in a lot of effort. It is a shame that this issue is being politicised at the very last minute into this lowest common denominator. The Senate committee discovered that this essential infrastructure is necessary. For example, in this state's economic powerhouse of the Pilbara, particularly in the Shire of Roebourne, and also in Port Hedland, some in that economic powerhouse currently rely on dial-up and the occasional wireless access. This is very important essential communications infrastructure for this state. That is what this national broadband network can give us. But I am not talking only about that, members. Between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of homes in Western Australia currently have no access to the internet. Those homes will be serviced by this infrastructure. Therefore, this is a very welcome proposal. The Greens participated in the Senate inquiry. During

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the inquiry, the Greens raised the issue of the geographic and socioeconomic digital divide. Probably the only state that illustrates that apart from our own state of Western Australia is Queensland. Western Australia and Queensland are the two states that are powering our national economy. It is, therefore, appropriate that these two states be provided with this infrastructure.

We can learn some very interesting things from an article in *The West Australian* today by Mal Bryce. Mal Bryce is a former Deputy Premier of this state. He established Scitech. He established Technology Park in Bentley. He also, as I am sure members opposite will remember, established the Small Business Development Corporation. This is a man whose opinion is highly valued. I know not about Paul Murray's scientific qualifications. But I do know that when Mal Bryce talks about science and internet technology, his views should be heeded. He states in this article —

But if we harness the new network's potential, Australia will gain significantly through global competitiveness, increased productivity, a major stimulus to innovation, the online content revolution, the transformation of health and education service delivery, —

Which is extremely important in those regions that our Nationals colleagues are looking after so well —

the prospects of a low-carbon future and enriched opportunities for community development.

That is in a nutshell what this national broadband network will offer to Western Australia. It is, therefore, remiss of us not to support it strongly.

I do not understand why the Nationals will not get on board with this proposal. As I have mentioned, the Nationals have a focus on providing services for regional economies. Why would they not support providing fibre optics to those regional communities that are the most disadvantaged because of their distance from our city infrastructure?

This will connect them not just to the City of Perth, where they can apply for their driver's licence more quickly or whatever, but also to the international global economy that we are now intricately connected with. The kids who are growing up in rural Western Australia have a chance of a future in this global economy if they can just link in, and that is what this proposal for a national broadband network gives us.

The Greens have worked constructively with the government on this proposal, and they will continue to do that if the Australian Labor Party is returned to government, to ensure that the national broadband network, which as Hon Liz Behjat rightly acknowledges is a substantial investment in our future, remains in public hands. That substantial investment and the infrastructure that it will deliver to us should remain in public hands and should not be sold off as Telstra was. It should remain in public hands and we will work, if the ALP is elected, to ensure that it remains there and is not sold off, because this is going to be very important infrastructure for the future of Australia.

We have also proposed that the government undertake a public interest test if it is considering such a move. If we look at how the ALP government in the national arena has worked in the instigation of the Senate inquiry to consider exactly how a national broadband network can help us, we will see that that flavour is already there. We welcome that commitment to look at all points of view. Many experts in the industry have participated in that inquiry and made significant contributions to what is now being put forward as a policy by the ALP. It is also important to note that we are continuing to support extra consumer protection. That will be important, because users will need to have some protection when this broadband is rolled out.

That is the view that the Greens are taking. I am really concerned that our state government is not considering it as a boon for us that we can roll this out to our constituents at federal cost. I welcome Hon Kate Doust's suggestion that we bring this to the attention of the citizens of Western Australia, because it is a very important issue. People will have to decide at the polls on Saturday which way they want to go. Do they want the very substandard proposal that the coalition is putting forward or do they want a future for Western Australians in which we can be provided with some very important communications infrastructure? Clearly, I support the motion.

**HON MIA DAVIES (Agricultural)** [10.52 am]: This is a very important issue. As both speakers today have already touched on, broadband infrastructure in regional Western Australia is sadly underdone at the moment. There has been a plethora of information in the newspapers and on the radio and television since the announcements were made, but this issue is becoming as important as roads, water infrastructure and railways. It is critical infrastructure that will drive the future of our regions. Unfortunately, I have to say today that I do not think that either plan deals with regional Western Australia adequately, and that is very unfortunate.

**Hon Kate Doust:** Have you seen the map?

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**Hon MIA DAVIES:** Yes, I have seen the map.

I will go through both plans—I do not think that has been dealt with today in detail—and I am happy to be corrected, because, obviously, a lot of different figures are being thrown around. The ALP plan will cost \$43 billion. I have read that it is going to cost up to \$2 000 for every person in Australia. It is fibre-optic cable to 93 per cent of Australian homes. Unfortunately, when we talk about big figures like this, although it sounds fantastic when a national announcement is being made, the seven per cent of homes that will miss out on the broadband tend to be in my electorate and Hon Col Holt's electorate. It is too often the case that we miss out completely. The minimum speed will be 100 megabits a second, with a maximum of up to one gigabit a second. In areas where the fibre-optic cable cannot be rolled out, either a wireless or satellite service will be provided, with a minimum speed of 12 megabits a second. The national broadband network will be government controlled until 10 years after the rollout is complete, and it will be a monopoly control over the national fibre network. It has been suggested, and I have read, that users could end up paying up to \$200 a month, and that is of great concern, because, unfortunately, that is probably beyond the means of many families in Australia. It is wonderful to have this whiz-bang, you-beaut network, but not so great if no-one is going to take it up.

The federal Liberal–National coalition's plan will cost \$6 billion, and it has promised \$750 million for fixed broadband optimisation. It is going to spend \$1 billion on fixed wireless networks in outer suburban areas, and \$700 million for new satellite services, with a \$2.75 billion investment in new fibre-optics backbone. The existing copper and coaxial cabling between the local exchange and the premises has been touted as being used for the connections. I have also read that that is reaching capacity, so that is of concern in the case of the federal Liberal–National coalition's plan.

Everyone agrees that the benefit of a fast internet service is that it will drive new services and entrepreneurship. It will enable us to connect globally at a level that our international competitors have access to. There will be productivity gains—there is no doubt about that—for those who can access it. We have heard discussions about remote medical consultations and giving people access to that. Obviously, this state government has made an investment in the vast telecentre network, which is now known as the community resource centre. We have taken up the proposal that was rolled out by the Nationals and the Liberal Party many years ago to enable regional people to have access to the internet when it was not available to them in their own homes. We are obviously thinking about how internet technology can improve the lives of regional Western Australians. However, I am not sure that accessing medical services through this new broadband service will apply in areas where it is needed most, because they are just not going to be able to access the internet.

We have talked about other benefits. E-learning is obviously very important. There is a lot of online learning for regional students through universities. I would like to see less, but there is that opportunity for those who choose to do their degrees online. There is also the ability for people to access government. The community resource centres are just that; they are a shopfront for government in towns where there are no government services.

**Hon Adele Farina:** But they're not open 24/7.

**Hon MIA DAVIES:** They are not open 24/7.

**Hon Adele Farina** interjected.

**Hon MIA DAVIES:** That is right; but often it is the only place in some towns where people can access government services.

For me, some questions are unanswered. They have been raised by a number of people such as media commentators, and names have been thrown around this morning. How many people will need to use the NBN to make it viable? Is the fixed-line product the best option when a lot of people are turning to mobile networks? Whom will it get to? I know that Hon Kate Doust has been waving a map. I have in front of me a list of towns, and I think there are more missing than there are noted in Western Australia. I remain unconvinced that the people whom I represent —

**Hon Kate Doust:** Murray Criddle seems to think it is a good idea. He's quoted in *The Geraldton Guardian* as saying it will improve —

**Hon MIA DAVIES:** For Geraldton it is fantastic, but we are not just about Geraldton. It is absolutely fantastic for the Square Kilometre Array. It will drive investment and employment. I am on the record as saying that if that is the plan that goes ahead, Geraldton will benefit, but there is still seven per cent of the population in regional Western Australia that will not be able to access it, and that is not accommodated in either plan that has been put forward.

It is also of concern that there has been no detailed business plan for the NBN. People need to know how much it is going to cost. I do not think that people —

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**Hon Kate Doust:** Part of it will be funded by government—it has been costed—and the remainder will be raised by NBNCo after year six. The detail is out there.

**Hon MIA DAVIES:** There has not been a business case put to the Australian people to actually make —

**Hon Kate Doust:** Why don't you go on to the federal minister's website and look?

**Hon MIA DAVIES:** Hon Kate Doust, I have done a lot of reading on this.

**The PRESIDENT:** Order! Let Hon Mia Davies make her own speech.

**Hon MIA DAVIES:** Thank you, Mr President.

I am slightly cynical about the rollout. It seems to be a bit eastern states heavy. That has been a concern of the Nationals right throughout this campaign, and not just on this issue. I refer to Wednesday's article in *The Australian* written by Nicola Berkovic and Adam Cresswell. The article details first-release and second-release sites in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria; Victoria, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. Western Australia is right down the bottom. They all appear to be marginal seats in those states. Unfortunately, there have been a fair few announcements by both major parties —

**Hon Kate Doust:** I think your party is going to benefit from one of those—Geraldton.

**Hon MIA DAVIES:** I have already said that Geraldton will benefit if the national broadband network goes ahead. I am talking about the remainder of regional Western Australia. There is more than one town in regional Western Australia, Hon Kate Doust—there are many in my electorate. To steal a phrase from another article in *The Australian*, both sides lack realism in bush broadband policy. Andrew Colley, who writes for the information technology section of *The Australian*, stated in his article —

**REGIONAL voters have no clear winner when it comes to the bush ...**

Hon Kate Doust also mentioned that people do not want mobile phone towers across the countryside. Actually, they just want access to the internet and to be able to use their mobile phones. I have a letter from a constituent. I welcome comments from Hon Kate Doust, if she has the opportunity to speak again. The letter reads —

To the Australian voters ... In regard to the Gillard NBN ... Have labour thought what a slap in the face it is for people like myself and our young family farming in the Coorow Shire Western Australia, when we will have the NBN cable run merely a couple of km from our farm without ever having the ability to connect to it. Connection for us will be too expensive for the government and I'm told will never happen. 43 BILLION dollars and it cannot be used by nearby residents. Then labour tells us it will assist country people. 43 BILLION dollars a fraction of this money would be far better off put toward a satellite broadband network one owned and controlled by Australia. This proposal to lay a cable down and not give people access is like building a water pipeline from Perth to Kalgoorlie and not give access to it along the dry journey to Kalgoorlie. The NBN will be a outdated technology within five years of completion, and it is not like the Sydney Harbour Bridge that just needs a lick of paint to keep it competitive. The NBN will be out of date and superseded before this country has paid half of it off.

They are not my words. There are real concerns out there that while this fantastic network will run out into the regions, some people sitting alongside it will not have access to it. That is the concern I have risen to talk about today. That is just one of many concerns. The National Party embraces change. We embrace appropriate technological advances. We can see the benefit of fast broadband for medical and teaching purposes and for accessing government services, but we remain unconvinced that either plan on the table at the moment is adequate.

Hon Kate Doust talked about the comments of our candidate for O'Connor, Tony Crook. She was right to raise them; she just failed to mention that Mr Crook also said that he was not confident about the announcement, given that the federal government's track record for rolling out major projects has been dismal.

**HON JON FORD (Mining and Pastoral) [11.03 am]:** I support the motion moved by Hon Kate Doust. I am a bit bemused about why the state government would not support it. I am not surprised but I am bemused. I was particularly interested in the comments of Hon Liz Behjat, because they were consistent with the debate that C.Y. O'Connor would have been subjected to for his visionary project, the Mundaring to Kalgoorlie pipeline. I am sure that the debate around that project would have been about the per capita costs to the people of Kalgoorlie versus the people of Perth, that the project was not needed, and questioning what the investment was about. Here we are, years and years later, with similar arguments. Everybody at that time would have said that the pipeline would be made redundant. That great piece of engineering is still delivering for the people of Kalgoorlie.

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I was interested to listen to the contribution of Hon Mia Davies. I am never quite sure when a National Party member gets up about which National Party he or she represents. Is it the National Party that is independent of the state government, the National Party that is part of the state government, the National Party that is not going to be part of a federal coalition government should Tony Abbott win on Saturday, or the other National Party that will be in coalition with a Liberal federal government?

**Hon Mia Davies:** There is no coalition.

**Hon JON FORD:** Well, we know. It was interesting that the position of Hon Mia Davies was akin to her saying "A pox on both your houses!" I think that was the gist of what she was saying. She obviously struggles with reading, because she is certain that most people in her constituency will miss out. I will talk about a couple of the towns in my constituency that will benefit from this program. There is Broome, Carnarvon, Kalgoorlie, Dampier, Denmark, Derby, Esperance, Exmouth, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Kambalda West, Karratha, Kununurra, Paraburdoo, Tom Price, Southern Cross, Port Hedland and Roebourne, to name a few. There is also the huge centre of Lancelin, which is going to get access to broadband, as well as Pinjarra, Wagin, Two Rocks, Dongara, Cunderdin, Kojonup, Wundowie, Yarloop, Yanchep and York. Hon Mia Davies was trying to imply that a lot of people will miss out. This is a \$43 billion visionary project that will supply a vital nerve into which people will be able to connect. In the end, competition to access the network and deliver services will fill in the gaps, because it will be demanded. This scheme will revolutionise communications in this state and country. A comparison of the Liberal – National coalition scheme and this scheme would be best given through the example of my house. I have a broadband connection to my house and I have chosen to have a wireless connector so that I can run computers everywhere in the house. I have a fantastic speed connection to the telephone line and then it is piss-poor everywhere else in the house because it is goes over the wireless. That is a problem.

Twenty years ago on the North Rankin Alpha we used a troposcatter device, which bounced our band signals off the troposphere over the horizon and into Karratha and then it was cabled down to Perth and elsewhere. Along came satellites, which increased the bandwidth. A satellite connection is now used. The trouble with that is that there needs to be a huge amount of replication software and hardware on board; that is, if a company has an office in Perth, an office in Karratha and an office offshore, absolutely everything needs to be replicated in each of those offices all the time. It is the same for government services. For instance, the Department of Housing may have an office in Perth and a major office in Karratha. National Party members keep talking up the Pilbara Cities program but they do not talk about the infrastructure needed to deliver that. Julia Gillard talks about that, but National Party members do not; they just talk about a nice little slogan.

Several members interjected.

**Hon JON FORD:** There is not enough water to build a city in the Pilbara. They have not addressed that issue and everybody knows it.

**Hon Helen Morton:** Do you want a city?

**Hon JON FORD:** Yes, but we need water and infrastructure there. It is not going to happen under this government.

**Hon Mia Davies** interjected.

**Hon JON FORD:** Nothing ever happened under the National Party!

Returning to what I was saying, all those things need to be replicated in each office. The national broadband scheme will mean that companies will be able to connect to one central database. There will be fast connections. It will be a real-time deal. The system will be exactly the same for people using computers in offices in Geraldton, Karratha or Kununurra as it is for someone using a computer in the Perth office.

Not only that, it does not matter who else is on the network because that will not affect anyone else. There will be thousands of people in regional Western Australia all online, all at the same time and all at the same speed. People are talking about having virtual boardrooms; that is, CEOs of companies all around Australia sitting at curved tables and looking across the room from them as though all these people were in the same room. That is how revolutionary this is.

It is a national project. The idea that somehow the private sector will invest in this sort of scheme is ludicrous. Are members opposite really trying to argue that if the Mundaring to Kalgoorlie pipeline had been opened up to private tender that somehow a private business would have come along and invested in that? It is a nonsense. When the road from Perth to Port Hedland was to be sealed are members opposite really telling me that a private company would have invested in that? Crikey! We cannot get them to invest substantially in a road that we all know about—it has been mentioned in this place many times—the Nullagine road. All of those mining companies up there use it; they are making handfults of money, but they will not invest in it! The national

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broadband network will benefit mining in WA. It will benefit oil and gas in WA. It will particularly benefit exploration in WA and the mid-range resource companies that give depth to the economy in WA. The national broadband network will increase investment in WA. Other countries will be able to come and have a look at what we have got, and access the information that we have got far quicker than any of us can imagine at this time.

Members on this side of the house have talked about the development of technology. When I first got interested in computers, I think the computer I had was 64 bits. The standard for a computer now is 80 gigabytes, because of software development. The argument is not that this will be redundant; it is that, without this investment, technology that is on the market now and will be developed in the future will outstrip the capacity of anything that currently exists in this country, including wireless. Everybody knows that optic fibre is what the broadband system needs. The short of it is that if members opposite want the country to stop dead in the water, vote for Abbott on Saturday. If they want WA to develop, grow and move forward, vote for Gillard.

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Transport)** [11.13 am]: It is now official in this federal election debate, if members did not know, that Labor and the Greens do, in fact, have a preference deal. But we knew that! That is about all that has come out of this debate today. It is a pretty extraordinary type of opposition, and it says a lot about the opposition, that they use non-government members' time in this chamber to prosecute matters relating to a federal election, instead of pursuing matters that directly need to be taken up with the government of Western Australia through the Parliament of Western Australia. That shows where their priorities lie! I was sitting here listening very attentively to Hon Kate Doust as she made, not so much a speech but a plea for help in desperation. I could not help but wonder whether had she spoken to Senator Conroy about this.

**Hon Kate Doust:** Absolutely.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Yes, and I bet that her factional colleague encouraged Hon Kate Doust to raise it in this place. The fact is that Hon Kate Doust does not think that her federal colleagues can sell their own message—clearly she does not. That could be the only reason why, in desperation, she would use non-government members' time in the Western Australian Parliament for this sort of rank jingoism. The frustration that came shrieking through the remarks of the mover of the motion seems to be based on a lack of understanding on the opposition's part and a failure to comprehend how the rest of us in the world do not see federal Labor leaders as deities, like all members opposite do, and Canberra as the centre of the universe, so that somehow we have to be pleaded with and lectured to about how terrific the federal Labor leadership is. It is a misuse of this Parliament's time. And members opposite get it wrong every time, as well!

Every time there is a federal election, members opposite want to allow that to intrude into what should be meaningful deliberations of this Parliament. Election after election members opposite come in here and tell the members in this house to vote Labor! I think we have probably all made up our minds. That is all members opposite are on about, and it is really a bit sad. I am going to repeat this back to Hon Kate Doust in due course, just as I pause to remind members, if they needed any proof about the form that this lot have got, that they allow every federal election to intrude here, and in every federal election they plead with members on this side of the house to see the light and vote for the latest Labor god to appear in the Pantheon! It may be Gillard this week. The other day it was Rudd—remember him—Kevin '07. And Latham! There is a good example! Let me remind members. I refer to *Hansard* of 23 September 2004 when we had a good lecture from one of our colleagues about this. We had a good lecture from Hon Ljiljana Ravlich, who is never short of a word. Amongst other things, Hon Ljiljana Ravlich said —

Mark Latham represents and signals a new era for Australian politics. Mark Latham is about national cooperation.

*Point of Order*

**Hon KATE DOUST:** I question the relevance when we are trying to talk about the benefit of broadband to this state and the member opposite is simply dragging up political issues. We are talking about a vital matter to the state, so I question relevance and ask that the minister speak to the motion.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Max Trenorden):** I suggest that I rule on this and we move on for the next 16 minutes. I see little difference in the debate since I have been sitting in this chair on the current motion. The temperature of the debate being as it is, let us see out the next 16 and a half minutes.

*Debate Resumed*

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**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Mr Deputy President, the tone of this debate has indeed been set by the mover and her colleagues, including the member who made the last contribution and who actually concluded his remarks by telling us all to vote Labor!

I go back to the words of Hon Ljiljana Ravlich at another federal election when she went on to say —

Mark Latham, if elected as the Prime Minister of this country, will be a progressive, forward-looking and outwardlooking Prime Minister and will be a Prime Minister of change. Mark Latham is a man for the future. Mark Latham will make an outstanding leader. It is fair to say that Mark Latham certainly has the Liberal Party worried at both a state and national level.

Well, Hon Ljiljana Ravlich got that right! She sure got that right. And I tell her that he has got a whole lot of people worried at this federal election as well; has he not? But not us!

*Point of Order*

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** Hon Kate Doust raised a point of order, and whilst I noted the Deputy President's comments about the tone of the debate, there is still a requirement for the member to be relevant to the debate. In the whole time that I have sat here, I do not know that I have heard him make any mention of the national broadband network, which is what the motion today refers to, and whether or not it is a benefit to the state of Western Australia. That is the motion that is being debated. I urge the Deputy President to make sure that the member remains relevant to that debate. I also make the comment that earlier today the President advised Hon Kate Doust to ensure that she did not engage in personal abuse. When I listened to what she was saying, her contribution did not go anywhere near the personal abuse I have been hearing in the past five minutes. If those are the rules that the President wanted applied earlier today, I think they should apply for the whole debate.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Hon Ken Travers, technically you are correct.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Good; rule that way, then!

**Hon Simon O'Brien:** Are you going to accept that, Mr Deputy President?

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Technically the member is correct. This debate is about a particular motion. However, as I am speaking now, the moments are ticking down, and from where I sit listening to the debate, that is probably a good thing. Members, I want to let this debate go, but I will point out the title on the motion to the Minister for Transport and perhaps he can direct his comments to that. I believe the debate should continue for the next 13 minutes.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** I seek further clarification on the point of order. I agree that the debate should continue for the next 13 minutes. However, I am a little confused, because you commented that I am "technically correct". My understanding of that is that you are ruling that the member needs to confine his comments to the motion. If that is not the case, I would like to know what you mean when you say I am technically correct. Is there some provision that says I can be technically correct, but the member can ignore standing orders? Will you explain a little further to the house what you mean when you say I am technically correct?

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Hon Ken Travers, I was in my office prior to 11 o'clock listening to the debate on the audio, and I heard what the President said. I heard the debate that occurred before I took the chair. I am telling the member my measure of the amount of personal comment and its relevance to the debate is that it has not changed from the first speaker debating this motion.

We have now lost two or three minutes. I believe this debate is one of those that happens from time to time in the chamber. I have already told the Minister for Transport to make remarks relevant to the topic—that is, the motion before the house—and I believe we should continue the debate.

**Hon Ken Travers:** Thank you.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Thank you, very much, Mr Deputy President.

For the record, the house has not heard anything from me this morning that could be characterised as abuse. I might be saying things that members opposite do not want to be reminded of, but it is not abuse. The only name-calling that I can recall happening was from the mover of the motion who threw names about, but we did not call points of order about that.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Minister for Transport! You were making an entertaining speech and I suggest we get back to that. I have ruled on the process; let us move on.

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**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** That is what I am trying to do, Mr Deputy President. All my remarks are couched towards the fraudulent nature and motive of this motion about the national broadcast network proposal.

*Withdrawal of Remark*

**Hon ED DERMER:** I do not believe it is parliamentary for one member of this chamber to accuse another of acting fraudulently, and I seek a withdrawal of the comment.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Max Trenorden):** Hon Ed Dermer, I was listening to what the minister was saying. He used the word “fraudulent”, but he did not direct it to any individual. He said it was a fraudulent debate. Let us continue with the process. We are very touchy this morning.

**Hon KEN TRAVERS:** On that point of order, the minister referred to a fraudulent motion. I cannot see how that can be interpreted as anything other than the minister implying that the member has moved a fraudulent motion. I do not have with a problem with how you, Mr Deputy President, determine what words are parliamentary or are not parliamentary, but I do not know that it is right to say that the words were not clearly directed at a member.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT:** Hon Ken Travers, the word “fraudulent” is used in this chamber on many, many occasions. Unless it is directed directly at an individual and the method by which that individual is operating, I will take it to be a generic term. That is where I believe we are at, and I ask the Minister for Transport to continue his speech.

*Debate Resumed*

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Thank you, Mr Deputy President.

It is perfectly legitimate in addressing the question about national broadband network proposals —

**Hon Adele Farina:** He said it once!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** That is twice.

It is perfectly legitimate to reflect, in response, about the apparent motives of using non-government business time for matters that touch on the federal election and, in making that point, it is also legitimate to reflect on the ongoing form of the opposition in doing this election after election, whether they are admiring Mark Latham or Kevin Rudd—do members opposite remember him?—or Hon Julia Gillard, who has brought out this policy on the run about the national broadband network.

Several members interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** It is proposed to spend \$43 billion, if that is the right figure, on a poorly developed and immature proposal that has not been worked up. It is an incomplete proposal made on the run. I said, by way of slightly unruly interjection during the remarks of Hon Kate Doust, when she was referring to a political column written this morning by Hon Mal Bryce—holding that paper up as some sort of holy writ, as if to say the words should be not in newsprint but chiselled in stone—that the member did not want to also talk about the column which was in the same paper and which may even have been on the same or opposite page written by a political commentator in the form of Paul Murray.

Several members interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** He is a political commentator, not a scientific one! He is a political commentator who knows when to be very wary about some of the things put forward in the context of a federal election campaign, particularly by the federal colleagues of the member who moved this motion.

If members opposite look at that column in detail, they will soon see the very big question mark articulated in that very same paper. I only mention it because the member who moved the motion is relying on that publication in support of her arguments. I am telling her that if she reads a little more widely in the same publication, she will see the same sorts of fears that objective people have about the proposal put forward by the federal Labor Party to take a colossal and possibly uncapped amount of Australian taxpayers' money—much of it presumably to be gouged out of the Western Australian economy and its industries—and to pass it around wherever Labor sees fit. The same crew brought us such colossal fiascos as the home insulation disaster, which was very expensive and very tragic, and which destroyed a good industry and achieved nothing.

A government member interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Yes, there is a list of them. Even the incumbent Prime Minister, who has been in office only five minutes, has plenty of form when it comes to wasting colossal amounts of taxpayers' money through the so-called school building programs. That is the track record of the Labor Party, and it now has a spending

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program that will eclipse even those disasters—a program which has not been thought through and about which we have no detail. Labor says, “Trust us; this is the way of the future and you are a Luddite if you don’t accept that.”

**Hon Kate Doust:** Well, you are!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** There we are; the member is calling me names again, but I am not worried about it. I do not want —

**Hon Ken Travers:** The Leader of the House considers that to be a compliment!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** That occurs in the hurly-burly of debate, but do not accuse me, members opposite, of abuse when I am not abusing, when members opposite are in fact the ones hurling abuse.

**Hon Ken Travers:** The Leader of the House would consider it a compliment if we called him a Luddite.

**Hon Kate Doust:** He would take it with great gusto. In fact, it is disappointing the minister responsible is not responding to this motion, and that he has left it up to you!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** It is interesting; Hon Kate Doust is here as a spokesperson for Senator Conroy, one of her factional allies, because she cannot find anything in her shadow portfolio to raise with the minister here on my right. That is how the member should be spending non-government business time in the Western Australian Parliament, rather than trying to communicate with a packed public gallery of swinging marginal voters, which the member has been out terrorising in Victoria Park lately. Let us get on with the —

Several members interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Mr Deputy President, I am trying to address the terms of this motion and these unruly interjections are preventing me from doing so.

**The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (Hon Max Trenorden):** Members, can we just have some calm for four minutes. It has been an enlightening debate from both sides. Let us calm down for a few minutes.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Let us make a couple of things clear in conclusion. What is it that the mover of the motion, her colleagues and her Greens associates are trying to convince us of and failing so miserably to do so? They say that \$43 billion should be given to this federal Labor government on trust, given its track record. They say that with the benefits of \$43 billion of broadband investment, the government could achieve all sorts of great results such as people using the internet and getting better access speeds. I would hope so for \$43 billion! Would it be good if people could communicate more directly and easily in the course of their business with remote parts of this state? Yes; of course it would be good!

**Hon Ljiljanna Ravlich:** So you are voting Labor!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Members opposite convinced me to vote for Mark Latham in 2004! Members opposite argued very strongly for Latham in 2004. They argued strongly for Rudd in 2007 and now they are arguing for Gillard in 2010.

Members opposite probably have the gall to say that I am not listening, but when it comes to \$43 billion, or whatever the figure will be, that is a very poor priority for this state opposition to put all its faith in. It is a very confined basket in which to place all the eggs. What better could we do with \$43 billion? We know what the Labor Party wants to earmark \$43 billion for. Would we get some good outcomes? We certainly would but I do not know that we would get \$43 billion worth. However, in committing to that in this place today, let us look at what the state ALP and the Greens are stopping the people of Western Australia from getting, because we could do a lot with our share of that \$43 billion. We could fix all the roads that were neglected during the Labor years. We could do a range of things. How many things could we do with our share of that \$43 billion?

Several members interjected.

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** Members opposite do not want to do any of it but they have faith that people from the east can just blow that money with their usual inefficiency on something that might not work. Hon Kate Doust does not like communication towers; she says that they are a blight on the landscape. Therefore, Hon Kate Doust does not want people to have mobile phone access, apparently.

**Hon Kate Doust:** Yes I do!

**Hon SIMON O'BRIEN:** The member cannot have it both ways! If she does not want mobile phone towers, then that is what the member stands for. It is very much a black hole. The first \$43 billion will be spent on this one project that has not been thought through. Is that not a very black hole from which to start when one

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considers the future policies of the Western Australian ALP? The Labor Party is not interested in investing in Western Australia. It wants all that capital money given over to a government that has shown that it is incompetent and that we cannot trust it.

**HON HELEN MORTON (East Metropolitan — Parliamentary Secretary)** [11.33 am]: It is really important that I make this point very clearly: Hon Kate Doust has not been completely up-front with the community about the impact of this on the Square Kilometre Array project. The SKA is guaranteed and will not be affected. The broadband link between Boolardy Station, Perth and the east–west corridor will be okay.

Motion lapsed, pursuant to temporary orders.