

NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK

317. Hon KATE DOUST to the Leader of the House representing the Minister for Science and Innovation:

I refer to the federal government's national broadband network.

- (1) Does the minister support the rollout of the national broadband network?
- (2) What action has the government taken to facilitate the rollout?
- (3) Will the minister outline the benefits of the national broadband network for Western Australia?
- (4) If the rollout were cancelled, what would be the impact on the ability of Western Australians to access high-speed broadband?

Hon SIMON O'BRIEN replied:

On behalf of the Leader of the House, I thank the member for some notice of this question.

- (1)–(4) The minister supports the provision of quality telecommunications services for all Western Australians, especially those in regional Western Australia. The state government, through the Department of Commerce, is committed to working with the federal government to support the rollout of worthwhile telecommunications projects, in particular the need for a high-speed link to the Square Kilometre Array project. The national broadband network has, as yet, provided no benefit to any Western Australian telecommunications user.

There have been significant delays in the rollout. The initial commitment was to commence building the national broadband network by 2008. The cost of the NBN has blown out from \$4.7 billion to \$43 billion.

Western Australia has been largely overlooked in the initial rollout of the NBN. Tasmania was selected as the first state for rollout of the NBN, despite Western Australia being the most regional state. On 17 May 2010, the federal government announced five NBN test sites in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Western Australia was ignored. While the federal government is funding a \$25 million fibre-optic backbone between Perth and Geraldton, the federal government is giving preference to other states ahead of Western Australia.

Given the lack of real action from the federal government in addressing regional telecommunications needs in Western Australia, the state government in the recent budget announced an allocation of \$120.23 million over three years to expand mobile telephone coverage in the state's major regional highways and to address black spots. The program will incorporate an \$80.3 million initiative over the next four years to upgrade communication systems for regional police and emergency services.