

NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK — FIBRE-TO-THE-KERB CONNECTIONS

234. Ms A. SANDERSON to the Minister for Innovation and ICT:

I refer to the announcement by NBN Co that it will roll out fibre-to-the-kerb connections to an extra 440 000 premises across the country. Can the minister advise the house whether any Western Australians will benefit from this announcement; and, if so, how many?

Mr D.J. KELLY replied:

I thank the member for her question. I know that, as the member for Morley, she has been very vocal in taking up the issue of poor internet quality in her electorate.

Yesterday, the federal government announced a newer and more improved version of the NBN—fibre to the kerb—will be rolled out to an additional 440 000 premises across Australia. People will know that the federal government's preferred way of delivering the NBN was through fibre to the node, whereby the fibre stopped at a node in the suburb—it is a bit like a digital horse and cart—rather than the original plan that was put in place by federal Labor to be fibre to the premises.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Dawesville, are you talking to yourself or what?

Mr D.J. KELLY: There have been a lot of complaints about the fibre-to-the-node technology. It has been slow to roll out and people have simply not been happy with it. Whether it is trying to get your kids to do their homework or whether a small business is trying to do business, fibre-to-the-node technology has proven to be significantly inferior technology. For the last six months, there has been talk that fibre to the kerb was going to be rolled out. Some people, and constituents in the electorate of Morley, were hopeful that the federal government was now starting to hear complaints about fibre-to-the-node technology and that for the rest of the rollout in WA more fibre to the kerb would be rolled out.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members!

Mr D.J. KELLY: I wrote to Senator Mitch Fifield, the federal Minister for Communications, asking to meet with him all last year to urge him to give Western Australians more fibre-to-the-kerb technology. He finally found time last Thursday to meet with me. After a year in office, I said to him, “Are we going to get more fibre-to-the-kerb technology?”

Mr R.S. Love interjected.

Mr D.J. KELLY: Members might want to hear this.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, you say something once, it is funny—twice, it is not.

Mr D.J. KELLY: A lot of people in the regions are very unhappy about the standard of the NBN rollout in the regions. I have heard nothing from the National Party about that issue since we came to government. They might want to listen. They say they are representing the people of the regions, even though we have more regional seats than they have in the Parliament.

Mr V.A. Catania: Sit down!

The SPEAKER: You might be standing up and going home soon, member for North West Central. I call you to order for the first time.

Mr D.J. KELLY: When Senator Fifield finally met with me on Thursday and I asked him whether Western Australia was getting more fibre-to-the-kerb technology, he said it would only happen if it was cheaper—so the criterion was not whether it was more superior technology—and that only 70 000 households in Western Australia would get fibre-to-the-kerb technology. In Western Australia, less than five per cent of residents will get fibre to the kerb.

What he did not tell me was that he was going to announce on Monday or Tuesday of this week that an additional 440 000 premises around Australia were going to get fibre to the kerb. He did not mention that at all. When that announcement was made, the question was: is any of it going to come to WA? I have not been able to get clarity on that from his office. *The West Australian* has reported that only 3 000 to 4 000 homes in Western Australia will get fibre-to-the-kerb technology. Less than one per cent of Western Australian households will benefit from the additional 440 000 homes that will get it. Again, Western Australia is being duded.

The outcome of this rollout is that 61 per cent of customers in WA will be relying on fibre-to-the-node technology. That is more than the case in any other state in Australia. In Queensland, the percentage will be 43 per cent; in New South Wales, it will be 39 per cent; and in Victoria, it will be only 32 per cent. More than double the number of customers in WA will rely on fibre-to-the-node technology rather than fibre to the kerb when compared with Victoria. Western Australia has been seriously duded once again.

What really disappoints and surprises me is that members opposite have said absolutely nothing about this issue since there has been a change of government.

Mr Z.R.F. Kirkup interjected.

The SPEAKER: Member for Dawesville, we do not have a defibrillator in the house. I call you to order.

Mr D.J. KELLY: I would have thought that members opposite would have been taking this issue up with their federal counterparts in both the Liberal Party and the National Party, but there has been nothing done on it. I have been disappointed that their federal Liberal counterparts like Julie Bishop and Mathias Cormann, likewise have again let Western Australia be duded by the federal government in the rollout of the national broadband network. Their representation has been absolutely hopeless. Members opposite have done absolutely nothing about it, just like when we had the GST rollout and just like the NBN rollout. Members opposite have done absolutely nothing.

Several members interjected.

The SPEAKER: Members, I will not have anyone shouting across the chamber like that. He is entitled to be on his feet. When you get on your feet, you want to be listened to. Make sure you do it for the opposition.