

ADJOURNMENT

Fadden Electorate: Telecommunications

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (7.55 p.m.)—Mr Speaker, thank you for the liberty you gave me in delivering my maiden speech with respect to time. I appreciate that no such liberty will be given henceforth in this place. And thank you for the opportunity to raise a significant issue within the electorate of Fadden. Fadden, as this place well knows, is the fastest-growing electorate in the entire nation. It is also one of the three Gold Coast seats, and the Gold Coast has the largest number of small to medium enterprises in the nation. In that context, I raise the issue of the parlous state of ADSL telecommunications or high-speed broadband within the electorate. Considering it is the fastest-growing electorate in the nation and has more small to medium enterprises Gold Coast wide than any other electorate or city in the nation, this is of significant concern.

For the last 18 months Telstra have underinvested in the exchange areas. They have not added any more ADSL ports to current exchanges nor upgraded exchanges, to the point whereby suburbs such as Oxenford, Gaven, Coomera, Upper Coomera and parts of Maudsland are not able to get high-speed broadband. This has a significant impact on families moving into the area and of course on the small business community which is trying to grow and thrive in the area.

I was perplexed when the Prime Minister during question time today made the point that, with ADSL2 being turned on, over two million new connections will be available. I have spoken with the head of Telstra for the Gold Coast and presented the issues which the constituents of Fadden have. Telstra made it very clear that ADSL2 on the Gold Coast, although switched on progressively over exchanges, will not allow a single new user to get ADSL services. Existing users will be able to upsell, paying more money for a higher speed or higher rate broadband using ADSL2. But no new ports will be added, no new equipment, no exchanges upgraded; therefore, no new connections. I can only assume that the Prime Minister during question time was speaking about other electorates because, in the fastest-growing electorate in this nation, there will be no new connections because of ADSL2.

Furthermore, until the government make a decision on their next generation plan for high-speed broadband, whether it is fibre-to-the-node or other architecture or technology, Telstra will not invest in what they see as old or outdated equipment, thereby not allowing any more ports into exchanges either wholesale to competitors or to onsell through their own retail arm.

Even if the government was to make a decision today on the new technology for fibre-to-the-node, it would still take approximately 12 months for the rollout of such technology before new connections are available to the fastest-growing electorate in Australia and, indeed, the home of small business, the Gold Coast. If the government were to make a decision today, it would still be 12 months away from new connections. I raise this issue with the House. It is, frankly, not good enough for Telstra to leave Fadden in the lurch and to deny people the opportunity of high-speed broadband.

The government's rhetoric during the election campaign with respect to all Australians needing access to high-speed broadband to enrich their life and to advance their business was entirely correct. Unfortunately, their words speak louder than their actions. So I do ask the government to facilitate the move on their next generation architecture to make a decision to allow Telstra to upgrade their equipment. And I beseech Telstra to look for equipment to put in the exchanges in Fadden and to add ports in Fadden so that people in the fastest-growing electorate of this country are not disadvantaged as they currently are.

The SPEAKER—Order! It being 8 pm, the debate is interrupted.