

We The People
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We the People 258 NBN An Unnatural Disaster



Good Day to you. We hear about natural disasters on a regular basis including earthquakes, floods, droughts, cyclones, bush-fires and even tsunamis. For the most part we can't stop them, rather just prepare for these events. The resulting costs are often enormous but unavoidable. Today I would like to share some thoughts on an **unnatural disaster** that we could have avoided and that's the National Broadband Network. It first came to us in a cheap political thought bubble by PM Kevin Rudd. By this I mean no business case, no budget, no funding and no plan. Rudd then put a bloke in charge of the NBN being Steven Conroy who knew nothing about the proposal or budgeting and made a monumental mess of the project. Put simply, in my view he was incompetent. Conroy has retired from politics now, no doubt on a healthy tax payer funded pension leaving the Australian public financially duped.

Now enter Malcolm Turnbull as PM with the claim he knows about telecommunications and data and all that digital binary stuff. It is the current federal government which must now fix the languishing NBN and save some money as Australia **could not** afford this massive project in the first place. So first up he promises to spend \$50 billion on fossil fuelled diesel submarines as a terrific investment in national security and border protection. Could this be another debacle just like the NBN but.... let me not stray from topic. So before forcing Australia into a republic, Malcolm says we can save a bob or two by using the aging Telstra copper network from the end of the fibre cable to everyone's home and this is called fibre to the node. This is akin to buying a Ferrari and then only being allowed to drive on roads with speed bumps. It is technically irresponsible and a waste of tax-payers money. In fact it's as stupid as making Marise Payne the Minister for Defence but.....let me not stray from topic.

Let's be clear that federal Labor created this Rudd-erless NBN mess and Malcolm Turnbull has had to fix it, which he hasn't and in fact complicated the matter technically which cripples the network and the thing is now wildly over his revised budget too. The basis of a national fibre network is good but even the New York Times in May this year has correctly reported on our technical incompetency, first with the census collection mess and now the NBN. IT giant Akamai ranks us at 51 in the world trailing developing economies like Thailand and Kenya. We are quite literally an international laughing stock and the lucky country no more. The story of Australia's costly optical fibre internet bungle illustrates the hazards of mingling telecommunication infrastructure with the impatience of modern politics. The internet modernization plan has been hobbled by cost overruns, partisan manoeuvring and a major technical compromise that put 19th-century technology between the country's 21st-century digital backbone and many of its homes and businesses.

There are other options such as wireless and new technology is producing some very fast data speeds but wireless is significantly limited when heavily loaded with users. The NBN back-bone is needed to support the nation's communications , mobiles, business, science, education, medical and defence. It's so very disappointing to reach this point and find we have a huge national debt added to by the NBN **which is not yet brought to bear in the national accounts**. We are becoming nationally poorer while shadowy figures get wealthy and none of this needed to happen. What we **have done** is to recently give all politicians a pay rise and to cut the pensions of many senior Australians. NBN really should stand for **National Bingo Night** where the players yell out "bingo" when we lose another billion but.... let me not stray from topic.

Until next time this Kent Bayley