



Sharon Grierson MP
Federal Member for Newcastle

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GOVERNMENT FORGETTING BASIC SERVICES IN COMMUNICATIONS

While the Howard Government was spending another \$20 million promoting its full sale of Telstra, it had forgotten about basic phone, broadband and postal services, Federal Member for Newcastle Sharon Grierson told Parliament today.

Commenting on the launch of Telstra's new network last Friday, Ms Grierson said, "Telstra says that affordable mobile broadband services will now be available to 98% of Australia's population. I sincerely hope that this includes people in areas like Coral Sea Avenue, Shortland, who are unable to access ADSL broadband services."

"I will be watching closely to make sure the new network delivers for these people."

Commenting on technicians working on Telstra faults who are facing pay cuts of up to \$25,000 a year, Ms Grierson said, "many of these workers will simply stop repairing faults in rural areas because the lower rate won't cover what it costs them to do the job. This means even less of a response to calls for assistance with phone faults in regional areas."

Ms Grierson also welcomed the launch last Friday of the Postal Industry Ombudsman, given the release of Government figures which show big increases in the number of complaints about Australia Post Services. After the outsourcing of mail delivery in Stockton in 2001, for instance, complaints from the Stockton postcode tripled in the first year and then doubled between 2001 and 2005.

"To give some credit to Australia Post and their workers, they do appear to have sorted out some of the problems there. I will continue to monitor the situation and make Stockton residents aware that the PIO is now operational."

Reliable phone, internet and postal services are vital to the everyday lives of people in Newcastle. Instead of flogging off the rest of Telstra, the Government needs to get back to basics and ensure that these services are up to scratch.

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