



THE HON JULIA GILLARD MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Minister for Education

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

Minister for Social Inclusion

TRANSCRIPT

E&OE TRANSCRIPT
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ISSUES: Craig Thomson, National Broadband Network

TONY EASTLEY: The Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard spoke to chief political correspondent Lyndal Curtis a short time ago about the allegations levelled at Craig Thomson.

JULIA GILLARD: Mr Thomson has denied these allegations, and I note from today's newspaper reports that there is an independent audit under way.

LYNDAL CURTIS: Should he remain as the Chair of the House of Representatives' Economics Committee while that investigation is under way, or should he stand down?

JULIA GILLARD: Well, Mr Thomson denies these allegations. He strenuously denies them, and they're being independently audited. Obviously, that audit has to work its way through and come to its conclusions.

LYNDAL CURTIS: But hasn't the practice been in the past, with allegations such as those made against Belinda Neal, that while they're being investigated the MP stands down from a parliamentary position?

JULIA GILLARD: I think we're in a position where this independent audit is well under way. Mr Thomson does deny these allegations and we should wait for the outcome of the independent audit.

LYNDAL CURTIS: How seriously do you believe these allegations should be treated?

JULIA GILLARD: Well, Mr Thomson denies them and they're being independently audited. Obviously, the independent auditor is the best person to come to conclusions about these financial matters.

LYNDAL CURTIS: The Government yesterday announced a much more expensive, much faster broadband proposal. If this is the best way forward, why didn't you start with it?

JULIA GILLARD: The Government made a major announcement yesterday about how effectively to build the Snowy River Scheme of the 21st century. The Government has been through a request for tender process and it was clear from that process that the best way forward was for the Government to move to invest in broadband and to ensure that our nation saw a new National Broadband Network right around the country.

LYNDAL CURTIS: But it's not a proposal you started with. You spent 18 months and \$20 million investigating the way for, effectively, a second best proposal, haven't you?

JULIA GILLARD: We went through a request for tender process. We invited people in the market to step forward to the Government with their proposals. When we had been through that process, the Minister properly concluded that none of the proposals that came forward were the right solution for the nation. The Government then made a decision yesterday to take an historic step to make sure that this nation has a super fast broadband network. This is the infrastructure of the 21st century. It's about creating the jobs of the 21st century, both as the broadband network is constructed and through the use of the broadband network.

LYNDAL CURTIS: Why should internet companies put money into the new company you're setting up when they know you've got to build it anyway because you've committed to it, and they can spend their money developing a rolled gold retail option to offer when the new network comes online?

JULIA GILLARD: I think the reaction to yesterday's announcement shows great enthusiasm from business for this super fast broadband network and I'm not surprised by that. Businesses around this country; small businesses, big businesses, have cried out for this infrastructure development. They were very critical of the Liberal Government's track record of neglect of infrastructure, and particularly neglect of broadband. They see all of the economic possibilities of this super fast broadband network, and I'm sure many of them will be thinking through getting in on the ground floor and consequently, investing in the company that will roll this network out, the company the Government will create.

LYNDAL CURTIS: You're also asking ordinary citizens to buy bonds to help fund it. Isn't this hitting up taxpayers twice for the costs they pay through their tax dollars going to the project, then also get asked to spend their own money again?

JULIA GILLARD: I think many taxpayers, many Australians, will be excited about being part of and connected with this historic development of super fast broadband. People in the community understand the importance of this infrastructure. Communities that have been denied access to even the kind of broadband we have now.

LYNDAL CURTIS: But they're also paying – they will be paying for it through their taxes. Why should they be buying bonds as well?

JULIA GILLARD: Well it's a question of giving Australians the opportunity to take a part of this development. It's an opportunity I believe many Australians will be excited by. I think many Australians will be grabbing this opportunity with both hands.

ENDS.

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