

PM orders probe into Assistant Treasurer Stuart Robert home internet bills



Assistant Treasurer Stuart Robert during Question Time.

Greg Brown, Journalist, 3:16PM October 5, 2018

Scott Morrison has asked for an investigation into the high internet usage of Assistant Treasurer Stuart Robert. The Prime Minister said he had asked Special Minister of State Alex Hawke to look into the taxpayer funded internet usage of Mr Robert, after Fairfax Media reported the key Morrison ally racked up average monthly bills of \$1845.

This is about 20 times higher than the internet usage of other politicians.

“I have asked the Special Minister of State to look into this and report back to me, once I have head from the Special Minister of State then we will take the next step,” Mr Morrison said this morning.

“I think (Australians) would want an explanation and that’s why I have asked for one.”

The Australian has asked Mr Robert and Mr Hawke for comment.

Mr Robert told Fairfax his internet data usage was high because of “connectivity issues”. Mr Robert, from the Gold Coast seat of Fadden, was

promoted to the frontbench by Mr Morrison despite being the subject of a string of controversies.

Mr Robert released a statement this afternoon, arguing his home was in a semi-rural area and had unreliable internet connection. "A 4G Home Wi-Fi internet connection was the only way to receive reliable and stable internet access," Mr Robert said. "My internet, like many in semi-rural areas, was previously unreliable which interfered with my ability to perform my parliamentary and ministerial duties." "I can confirm that the NBN is now being rolled out in my local area and I have a connection appointment booked in. When installed, this will result in an immediate drop in costs to a level similar to other parliamentarians"

Mr Robert said he spent more than \$2000 a month on average for the connection at his Gold Coast residence in the three months to May, according to parliamentary expense records. His May bill alone totalled \$2832, while the vast majority of other MPs spent under \$300 a month.

Mr Robert said he had to use a wireless service as other cheaper connections were unavailable when the service was installed.

Finance Minister Mathias Cormann said an investigation into the Fadden MP's expenses is a decision for the Department of Finance. "Every member of parliament should use their work expense arrangements appropriately and carefully," he told Sky News on Friday. "In the end these are matters that are administered at arm's length by the department as appropriate. "I'm going to let Stuart explain the circumstances and I believe he has."

Additional reporting AAP
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