

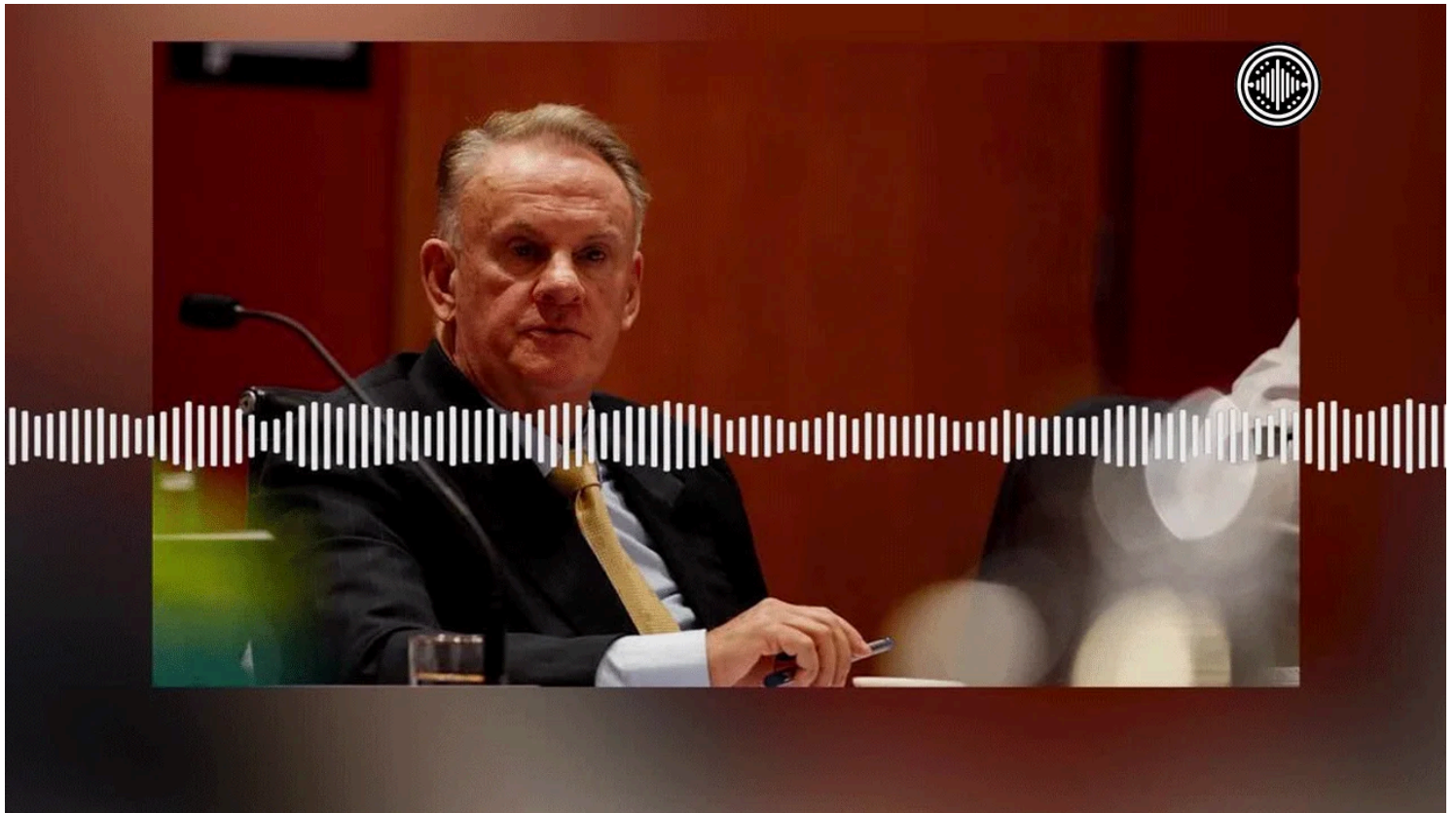
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Ex-Deputy Secretary Warns of Australia's Internet Cutoff Risk in War

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– Categories: Defence & Security



Australia's internet infrastructure faces significant risks in the event of a conflict, with former Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Dibb warning that the nation could be cut off within hours. This vulnerability highlights critical national security concerns surrounding Australia's reliance on undersea cables, which carry nearly all international internet traffic.

Dibb emphasized that Australia depends on just a dozen undersea cables, mostly routed through the Indo-Pacific region, making them susceptible to deliberate sabotage by sophisticated adversaries during wartime. Past incidents, such as the 2024 cable disruption

in Tonga, demonstrate how a single cut can isolate entire areas from internet access. With rising geopolitical tensions, particularly involving China, this fragility poses a serious threat to Australia's economic and defence communications.

Key sectors, including banking, energy, and telecommunications, rely heavily on these cables, with few immediate alternatives. While satellite networks like Starlink provide some backup, their capacity cannot support nationwide connectivity. The 2023 Defence Strategic Review acknowledged cyber vulnerabilities but prioritized long-term strategic assets, such as nuclear-powered submarines, over urgent physical infrastructure reinforcement. This leaves Australia exposed to potential disruptions in a conflict scenario, especially in contested areas like the Taiwan Strait or South China Sea.

The government's current response has been criticized for lacking clear strategies to diversify and protect critical cable networks. Major cyber defence investments focus primarily on espionage and cyber threats rather than physical cable security. Experts call for the establishment of redundant cable systems and regional data hubs to enhance resilience, but progress has been slow. Without stronger collaboration between government and industry, Australia risks significant operational paralysis in a crisis.

Ensuring the resilience of Australia's digital infrastructure requires urgent attention. Protecting these vital communication lifelines is essential for maintaining national security, economic stability, and sovereignty amid growing international uncertainty.