

KEEPING COMMUNITIES CONNECTED

9 May 2018

Submission to The Joint Standing Committee on the NBN -Inquiry into the rollout in rural and regional areas



Hello, my name is Michael Hoggett and I am the CEO, owner and co-founder of Kooralbyn Community Broadband Pty Ltd (KCB).

BACKGROUND

Kooralbyn is a locality in the Scenic Rim local government area in Queensland, Australia. It is approximately 22 kilometres (14 mi) south-west of Beaudesert, itself some 64 kilometres (40 mi) south of Brisbane in South East Queensland, and 56 kilometres (35 mi) west of Queensland's Gold Coast. Kooralbyn is situated at the southern end of the Teviot Range.

At the 2016 Australian Census, Kooralbyn recorded a population of 1,725 people.

Kooralbyn is a town that is typical of many of its size throughout Queensland and indeed Australia. The local economy took a significant downturn in 2008 when the Kooralbyn Resort, which featured a diverse range of recreational facilities including a Golf Course and Resort Hotel complex, went into liquidation. The Resort had been opened in 1980 and was one of the driving forces of the Kooralbyn economy. It has since reopened in 2016 though not as the economic driver it had been in its previous incarnation.

THE KOORALBYN COMMUNITY BROADBAND STORY

Historically, Kooralbyn has had an extremely poor internet service, with most consumers receiving a service slower than 1 mega bites per second (mbps), if any at all. Many have as a result had to rely upon dial-up/ADSL services or 3G & 4G mobile data, at prohibitive cost.

In late 2016 a combination of personal and business interests inspired me to do something to try and improve Kooralbyn's Internet services. My step-son had just finished high school and was faced with entering a depressed job market and the proposed NBN rollout for the Kooralbyn area had been pushed back to late 2019*.

After undertaking some initial research into Internet Service Providers and the available technology, I learned that the equipment required to provide far superior internet speeds to that currently available to the residents of Kooralbyn, was readily available. Further, that in the preceding 4 years the cost of that equipment had fallen approximately 80%.

So in early 2017 I founded KCB. KCB was founded with the aim of using a Wireless Internet Service Provider (WISP) model to deliver a fast, all weather internet service to any customer in the coverage area at a more realistic price for data.

- Currently our customers pay between \$0 for a restricted service and \$55 for an unlimited data plan.
- We do not contract our customers and they are free to leave our service at no penalty.
- We currently have 33 customers connected.

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Through quality and reliable internet service and affordable pricing we are stimulating the local economy to the benefit of the broader Kooralbyn Community. To date;

- We have built our own infrastructure to deliver this service.
- We have privately funded KCB's infrastructure at no cost to the taxpayer.
- We have had no funding or grant assistance from any level government.

ISSUES

On speaking with several NBN representatives the message we are hearing over and over is that they have a wonderful system, but they are unable to connect reliably over the last kilometre to the customer.

From my extensive conversations with NBN staff, it is apparent to me that NBN are;

1. Unaware of the recent advances in technology that enable KCB to provide this level of service to customers. And or;
2. Constrained or limited to the technological solution set out for them in 2011.

OUR SOLUTION & VALUE

Our system uses off-the-shelf Telecommunications grade technology, some of which only became available as recently as April 2017.

- Our system can deliver that last kilometre with negligible speed or data lost.
- It is cheap, reliable and simple to operate.
- It is easily scalable and works reliably in the city or the country.
- We require no cables or major linear infrastructure builds.
- The equipment can be deployed on existing infrastructure without concerns of interference.

Our system has the capacity to deliver very fast speeds of over 100mbps but is limited by the fact that we must take our feed from the old Post Master General era copper wires.

Through this recently developed off-the-shelf technology, we can deliver the internet to our customers at the same speed it leaves our servers with negligible speed or attenuation loss.

While we are currently only able to receive a total of 54mbps via the Telstra system we therefore deliver an 8mbps service to our customers. The alternative for our customers is only mobile data in most cases and as competition is so poor, unreliable or expensive that we are made very welcome. One of our customers has been able to remove himself from the overstretched satellite service at a great reduction in cost to himself and now has the benefit of unlimited data.

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COMMUNITY FIRST EQUAL ACCESS APPROACH

At KCB we believe our proven solution could be used as the template for the effective rollout of the NBN in all areas outside of the major centres. We are happy to cooperate with the NBN and have already offered our system as a testbed to them at no cost provided they connect us into their system to provide CVC (Backhaul). We will also provide the equipment for the link to the NBN, requiring no trenching or cables on their part. To date, this offer has only been met with confusion or misinterpretation with all NBN staff we have contacted to date. We are largely referred to irrelevant sections of the NBN and have yet been unable to find someone of authority within the organisation who understands technology our offer.

We know our system is the missing link to make the NBN a world class internet delivery system. We wish to do all that we can to help.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

KCB wishes to assist the enquiry in solving the problems plaguing the NBN. We would like to speak with someone within the NBN with sufficient technical understanding and authority to explore the opportunity we have been offering them.

* Residents of Kooralbyn have been advised that the rollout of NBN is being brought forward to May 2018. At the time of writing the date remains 2019 on the NBN website.