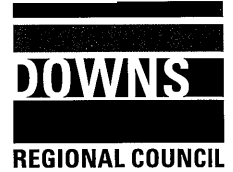




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ENQUIRIES TO:  
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FILE REF:  
11/10/2

JH:RLL

25 March 2011

Standing Committee on Infrastructure & Communications  
P O Box 3021,  
Parliament House  
**Canberra ACT 2600**

Attention: Andrew McGowan  
Inquiry Secretary

**By Email: [ic.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ic.reps@aph.gov.au)**

Dear Sir,

**Re: NEW INQUIRY INTO THE NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK**

The Western Downs Regional Council (WDRC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Inquiry into the National Broadband Network.

Located in South Queensland, 200 kilometres west of Brisbane, Western Downs Regional Council is a local government authority charged with the good governance of the region, which covers 38,000 square kilometres and has a current population of around 32,000 residents.

The region remains among the highest local government performers in Queensland and Australia with the region enjoying invigorating growth through continued agriculture, manufacturing and resource diversification.

Reversing the trend of rural decline, Western Downs Regional Local Government area has experienced an increase in population, which is expected to rise by a minimum of 11,009 persons by 2031 at an annual average rate of 1.4%.

Western Downs Regional LGA is alive with activity and businesses are continuing to diversify from traditional markets in the agricultural sector into components, parts and services for the burgeoning energy resource sector.

While Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing remains a major and critical force, contributing 16% to Gross Regional Profit (GRP) in 2009/10, its position as the dominant contributor to the economy has now been taken over by the mining sector with 17.6% of GRP.

The total GRP of the Western Downs Regional LGA was estimated at approximately \$1,759.4 million in 2009/10, representing an increase of 4.1% from the level of \$1,689.9 million recorded in 2008/09. However, with an expected resource sector investment of \$180 billion expected in the next 1-4 years, GRP is expected to rise dramatically.

Strong growth and development is evidenced across the region due to the energy sector with professional, scientific and technical services alone growing by 91.7% to \$42.3 million in the 2010 year, which was in line with a 40% growth rate in rental, hire and real estate services and above 20% in all other areas.

Within this growing economy, increased pressures on the labour market are reflected in low unemployment figures. The Western Downs Regional Council unemployment rate for the September Quarter 2010 was 3.9%, significantly lower than Queensland (5.6%) and Australia (5.3%).

Our regional economy is building, with many benefits for our residents as well as a multitude of opportunities and development occurring within local communities and industry.

The region has major opportunities for job growth, skilled workers and business investment attraction, export development and particularly economic growth. However, the WDRC recognises that if we are to meet our full potential as the sustainable energy capital of Australia in both food and mining, that potential may well be severely hampered if we do not have the corresponding capacity and capability of telecommunications.

We believe the NBN will greatly contribute to the delivery of government services, health, education, economic growth and sustainability. The WDRC clearly understands the importance to our communities of the NBN, and in fact developed a Telecommunications Strategy in early 2010 that encompasses the implementation of strategies to achieve all the benefits noted in your letter dated 9 December of a strong and all inclusive NBN network.

The WDRC has recently established an IT and Education and Training Task Group specifically to take advantage of the NBN and to implement the actions within our Strategy.

In further support of our need for the NBN, during December 2010 and January 2011 our region was inundated with flooding. A comprehensive study was undertaken on the impact of those businesses by the floods. That study received a 97.5% response rate of all retail, industrial, commercial and home based businesses across the region. A key issue highlighted in the study was the communication failure during this natural disaster. This impact was a contributing factor for our businesses that suffered over \$265 million in damages and revenue loss incurred.

The delivery of our Telecommunications Strategy, which is perfectly aligned with NBN objectives and the recognition from the floods of the importance to our regional economy of a robust NBN network and resultant communications has prompted our response to you.

The success of the NBN, and the associated benefits flowing from its' implementation, is reliant upon the delivery technologies employed to deliver the service to the premises. A network that delivers fiber to the premises (FTTP) will be able to leverage the maximum benefit to all users of the network by providing high bandwidth, low latency services suitable for a wide variety of existing and emerging technologies. Critically, these users include health, education, industry and government.

With the expected growth in population, economic growth and business investment in the region, we therefore request that the NBN rollout for Western Downs must, at all costs, be fiber to all the premises within the local government area.

We await your response.

Yours faithfully

Phil Berting  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**