The Hon Chris Bowen MP

Minister for Immigration and Citizenship

Ms Sharon Bird MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Infrastructure and Communications
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Bird

Thank you for your request on 9 December 2010 to provide a Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications. This is in relation to the capacity of the National Broadband Network (NBN) to contribute to the improvement of various areas in Australia.

Your letter has requested a Submission which covers a variety of key focus areas pertaining to the implementation of the NBN. I have provided a short response outlining some of the potential opportunities which the NBN may offer my Department and the community in terms of:

a)   the delivery of government services and programs.

In addition, my response includes information regarding:

i)   the optimal capacity and technological requirements of a network to deliver these outcomes.

Whilst my Department can potentially impact other key areas which you have requested commentary on, there will be other submissions which more fully address these areas.

Yours sincerely

CHRIS BOWEN

**Response to the Standing Committee on
Infrastructure and Communications**

NBN capacity to contribute to various areas in Government business.

**a) Capacity of the National Broadband Network to contribute to the
delivery of government services and programs**

The DIAC environment and NBN Opportunities

4. Whilst the NBN, as an enabling technology offers further potential for the
department to enhance service delivery, the existing onshore DIAC network is
already broadband based. The departments forward work program targets broader
efficiencies in its service delivery channels, and consistency of processing globally.
While this forward work program will make use of enabling technologies to improve
electronic communications (i.e. collaboration, voice and video conferencing, tele
presence etc) most of these technologies are independent of the NBN. These
improvements in technology do not require the NBN nor are they dependent on its
implementation. Once in place, the NBN is expected to increase the uptake of these
services by clients as improved access and speed will improve clients experience.

NBN Satellite capability – Christmas Island

5. The department currently has an Irregular Maritime Arrival (IMA) processing
centre on Christmas Island. Australian outlying islands—including Christmas Island,
Norfolk Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands—are not expected to receive NBN
coverage until new NBN Satellite capability has been deployed in 2014–15. In the
shorter term an interim satellite solution will be utilised. It is not clear at this stage
whether the interim solution will provide improvements in either service or cost to
communications for Christmas Island.

Engaging with our Clients

6. Departmental clients are likely to benefit from the NBN through an improved
online interaction to DIAC services. By improving access to the web, the NBN is
expected to assist the community to utilise a broader range of departmental services
including the search for information (FOI), online access to visa and migration
services, and improving the efficiency of business dealings with the department.

7. The department also anticipates that the NBN will assist a range of industry
groups to access its services. Examples include employer sponsored visas which
provide access to overseas trained doctors and nurses for health services and the
tourism and travel industry by improving access to departmental services such as on-
line visa lodgement.

8. The NBN, when combined with the government's Gov 2.0 initiative, is expected to
provide greater transparency to the Australian community on the department's

operations. Considering recent changes to the migration landscape, it is expected that the community will seek to engage with the department more often by accessing departmental information regularly. The NBN—through wider access to social media tools and a faster internet—will support these interactions.

9. To this end, the department is positioning itself for increased on-line engagement with the Australian community through the web channel.

Example Opportunities offered by the NBN

- **Support for Tele-working -** enhanced collaboration between remote workers, service delivery partners, and possibly clients. Implementation of the NBN enables greater opportunities for DIAC staff to undertake work via tele-working. DIAC is currently in the process of trialling Citrix Access Gateway (CAG) technology. This technology allows departmental staff to utilise a tele-working capability using their own (home based) equipment. As an enabling technology, the NBN is expected to provide greater reliability and speed for staff who use their own equipment with broadband access. The use of this technology would also permit remote workers to have access to more reliable, efficient broadband communications.

- **Training -** trainers could provide 'virtual' classroom led training to interstate and tele-working colleagues without having to travel.

- **Tele-presence Meetings -** through greater broadband speeds the NBN has the potential to increase tele-presence meetings. Examples of these are :

    o   Increased use of videoconference from multiple remote locations;

    o   Departmental 'virtual conference table' with service delivery partners;

    o   Clients in detention can appear before a Tribunal without having to leave the Detention Centre.

    o   Translators, Review Officers meeting with clients in remote locations.

    Home based Services - Implementation of the NBN could enable professional (DIAC) services to be delivered from home. An example of this is the provision of interpreting services via videoconferencing in early NBN release sites across Australia. The high data speeds and reliability available through the NBN will enable interpreter services to be provided by videoconference, enabling body language and other nuances of behaviour to maximise comprehension and reduce miscommunication. This is particularly important for health consultations.

- **Virtual Classrooms using collaborative broadband-enabled tools -** Implementation of the NBN potentially enables the delivery of high quality tuition using collaborative and interactive learning tools. An example of this

would be to trial the provision of virtual English learning services to eligible migrants in Regional early release sites.

- **Implementation of Gov 2.0** - The recent Gov 2.0 Taskforce Report focuses on greater public engagement and use of government information; a higher enthusiasm and utilisation of our public services; and external engagement with community, business and agencies.

  Implementation of the NBN will further support opportunities for the Gov 2.0 objective of public servants 'engaging energetically' with tools and capabilities of a 'collaborative web or web 2.0' nature. The core elements to be established within this architecture are people (collaboration, communication, profiles and blogs), information (knowledge management, information architecture, social media, content and records management), tools and services (eChannels, Self Service, Instant Messaging, voice and telecommunication, performance and management).

- **Communications and interactions with other Agencies -** The recent flooding event in Queensland has resulted in DIAC staff assisting Centrelink staff with Disaster Relief payments in a number of geographic locations. Implementation of the NBN could enable faster Government interactions where agencies partner or collaborate to deliver services. An example of this is the delivery of common (virtual) processing sites allowing a subscription service by the hosting agency to enable speedier response times.

i) Capacity of the National Broadband Network to contribute to the optimal capacity and technological requirements of a network to deliver these outcomes

Whilst the NBN, as an enabling technology offers further potential for DIAC to enhance service delivery, the existing onshore DIAC network is already broadband based. DIAC's remote presence at Christmas Island is currently provided by satellite.

It is expected that the NBN will provide opportunities for further supplementation of the existing DIAC network, especially in terms of the department's reach and 'points of presence'. This is especially true in remote processing locations.

Examples of the NBN's potential contribution to existing DIAC infrastructure are:

- **Rapid deployment to a new site (Detention or Ministerial location) -** Connection of new sites, such as new Detention facilities, to the DIAC network is dependent on the availability of a fibre network. In remote locations it can take many months for the fibre network to be made available. Full NBN coverage would allow greater flexibility for location of new facilities and speed up connection of all new sites, including new offices, ministerial offices, etc.

- **NBN enabled departmental reach and presence -** The NBN potentially offers a more efficient means of enabling professionals to progress remote processing through an increase in both the department's reach and presence at remote localities. An example of this is the ability for professionals to assess irregular maritime arrivals (IMAs) in remote Immigration facilities without leaving metropolitan locations. This may include immigration expertise from Australian Government Agencies (e.g. DIAC, AFP, Customs) as well as interpreters teleworking from early NBN release sites across Australia.

- **Business Continuity Planning -** Coupled with remote access technology the NBN has the ability to offer the department effective ways to deploy staff to where they're needed in times of an emergency. Greater access with fast broadband connection to the department's processing systems would enable cost effective response teams to deploy quickly. The recent flooding of the Brisbane CBD showed how an office can be vulnerable to the forces of nature, yet client services still need to be maintained.