

**PORT MACQUARIE-  
HASTINGS COUNCIL**

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**PORT MACQUARIE  
HASTINGS**

6 January 2011

Mr Andrew McGowan  
Inquiry Secretary  
Email: ic.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr McGowan

**New Inquiry into the National Broadband Network**

The attached comments are provided in response to your invitation to express the views of Port Macquarie Hastings Council on the new inquiry into the National Broadband Network.

Yours faithfully

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Andrew Roach  
General Manager



**Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Infrastructure and Communications**

**New Inquiry into the National Broadband Network**

Port Macquarie Hastings Council supports the provision of National Broadband Network, (NBN), through regional Australia given the significant effect it will have on economic and social opportunity.

In particular this submission relates to points (e) and (h) of the Brief.

***(Point e) – Impacting Regional Growth and Employment Opportunities***

A fundamental problem underlying many regional and rural areas is that core 'exports' are typically commodities – undifferentiated products or services which are only able to compete on price. The rule for winning in commodity-based areas is to provide the cheapest which in turn puts downward pressure on overheads such as wages and standard of living. Therefore it is very hard for such communities to increase their standard of living. This is reflected in Port Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area where there is a strong correlation between rural and low income.

Council is of the belief that NBN offers the potential to significantly 'change the game' for regional and rural Australia by enabling residents to escape the commodity trap by selling distinctive, high value products and services in the global market place at prices sufficient to achieve a good living while bringing new money into their area.

***(Point f) – Impacting business efficiencies and revenues, particularly for small and medium business and Australia's export market***

Council believes that it is important to accept that an uninformed, untrained and, in some cases, an unmotivated market will generally have a low demand for NBN, irrespective of the quality of the technology. Bewilderment concerning information technology leads to apathy and inaction.

Accordingly, as well as investing in NBN infrastructure and technology, Council believes that it is equally important for Governments, at all levels, to invest in the human resources necessary for educating people by showing how other businesses or households are utilising NBN based technology to access new markets and information. Initiatives aimed at supporting and motivating productive new behaviour at the regional and rural level is considered by Council to be an outstanding and appropriate public investment.

Accordingly, in addition to the provision of NBN infrastructure, the following recommendations are made::

- (i) Funding free cost of access for rural communities to public NBN enabled sites. It is believed that once the barrier of knowledge, awareness and access have been overcome, residents (potential businesses) will recognise new opportunities. It is not considered that this proposed free service needs to continue indefinitely.
- (ii) Arranging for mentors, such as students, to provide software application assistance linked to the specific needs and aspirations of individuals. With data comes information, information becomes knowledge and knowledge is critical to the development and performance of niche businesses competing across the globe
- (iii) Promoting the importance of NBN to the future of business throughout non-Metropolitan Australia.