

# SUBMISSION

**To: Joint committee of the National Broadband Network**

**From: Jason King, Owner, Bells Milk Bar & Museum, Chairman, Patton Village Community & Business Association.**

Wednesday 27 July 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

## **About Me and Bells Milk Bar:**

My name is Jason King. I am the owner operator of small tourism and retail business, Bells Milk Bar and Museum, located in Patton Street South Broken Hill just a few blocks away from the new Broken Hill Studios. Bells Milk Bar is a tourism award-winning 1950s milk bar with museum and retail gift area. We currently offer free Wi-Fi to all customers, and have established a new online market for our locally produced traditional Syrups and Cordials. Attached to the business is a retail gift area, which I hope to include for online sale, and we also have a National Milk Bar Museum attached.



Bells Milk Bar & Museum (est 1892 as a confectioner and cordial maker)

I have been involved in this capacity for over seven years. During this time I have also been actively involved in the local Broken Hill community including as a member of the local council Tourism and Film advisory groups, and as chairman of the Red Desert Live music and arts festival. As of November 2010, I volunteer as the founding chairman of Patton Village Community & Business Association, which was established to help develop a sustainable future for South Broken Hill and communities, which consists of lower socio-economic demographics. (I am writing this submission as a community member and business owner). Over the last seven years I have noticed some positive changes to our precinct, which with the right support will lead to sustainable community wellbeing for our precinct.

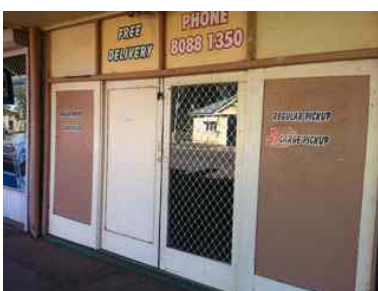
**I believe that fast tracking the NBN to Broken Hill will not only prevent our important local precinct from dying as other such precincts have already done, but that it will foster the kind of environment which will attract more of the 20-40 year old demographic to our community.**

This age group is grossly under-represented in our town and the lack of the energy, enthusiasm and vibrancy that this age group brings to any community is something that Broken Hill and all of our governments simply must address.

### About the Patton Village Precinct:

Patton Village is a newly coined name for the Patton Street shopping precinct in South Broken Hill. Once a bustling shopping hub, this strip shopping centre has seen better days. It currently provides many essential community services to residents of South Broken Hill including: Community Library, Doctor's Surgery, Thrift Shop, Fire Station, Pre School, Park, Post Office, Chemist, Hair Dressers, General Store and Food outlets. In addition the following is of note regarding Patton Village:

- Coles has announced they will **close their Patton Village supermarket** next year when they relocate to a new shopping centre on the other side of town,
- The new **film studios** are located nearby,
- More than 1/3 of the shops are either deserted, for sale, or for rent and several businesses in the precinct are for sale,
- Many local retail businesses are finding it tough,
- Patton Village cannot compete as a retail precinct (without the NBN to help businesses bolster local sales of unique products online),
- The precinct has been identified as an **important tourism precinct needing development** in a draft Broken Hill Tourism plan,
- Our biggest opportunity to develop a sustainable precinct is to attract new **businesses that rely on high-speed broadband access** such as the creative arts.



Vacant, For Rent, or For Sale

## Why is the NBN essential for my business?

Due to the low population in Broken Hill I have been forced to take my product online to grow my business. Having high speed internet capabilities will:

- Allow Bells Milk Bar to **effectively compete** in an increasingly technology-savvy marketplace.
- Facilitate production of video and audio interviews **capturing and sharing valuable oral history**.
- Enable **work from home** while caring for my 18month old son, Thomas.
- Help **eliminate the geographical barrier** to the rest of Australia.

## Why is the NBN essential for my local community?

While my business needs the NBN to facilitate continued growth, it is the Patton Village precinct and surrounding local residents that I believe will most benefit from the arrival of high speed internet. Due to the (as yet unmet) tourism appeal of the precinct, the imminent completion of a second major local shopping plaza to Broken Hill, our proximity to the Broken Hill Studios film studio precinct, and the precarious position of the precinct in terms of vacant or empty shops, the NBN may be one of the few factors that can tip the scale in favour of a positive and sustainable future for this important community hub. Some of the many reasons why it is essential that the NBN is fast tracked to Broken Hill include:

- **Health benefits** to elderly patients who have difficulty traveling (through diagnostic and specialist treatment using video technology)
- **Establishment of creative industries** to support the Broken Hill Studios
- Increased **economic benefits** to existing and new businesses by encouraging non-traditional retail offerings.
- Encourages and allows **disruptive innovation** through low rents and high technology propositions.
- Access (through the community library) to **latest technology for the socially disadvantaged** (many of whom live nearby to Patton Village)
- **Link with other local** cutting edge organisations like the Broken Hill Art Exchange operating out of the Duff St Art Precinct.
- Without the NBN, the precinct will **struggle to compete** with the two shopping plazas and CBD shopping strip.



Community Library



Pharmacy



Trading over 50 yrs



Unmet Potential...

I believe that the most critical factor facing Broken Hill for the long term community wellbeing of our important remote city, is the issue of **many our most talented and energetic young people leaving town because of the lack of opportunities here**. As a consequence of or as well as the above benefits, I believe that by fast-tracking the NBN to Broken Hill, it will **assist to retain our best young people as well as attract other young people to our region by offering them a high speed link with the rest of the world**. The social and economic implications of this possibility are exciting to say the least.