

26 July 2012

The Secretary  
Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network  
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Attention: Joint Committee Chair, Mr Rob Oakeshott MP

Dear Chair,

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission. Our submission lodged at this time last year outlined our concerns in the event of long delays to the roll out of high speed broadband in our area. You may recall your visit to the Silver City and the hearing in the town centre. A variety of local stakeholders presented you with detailed concerns about the inadequacies of the current infrastructure. We wish to restate that the current speeds, reliability and capacity of existing services are unacceptable in this region. We confirm our need for urgent consideration of being part of an early roll out plan by NBN Co.

The biggest issue of interest for people in Far West NSW is to be aware of when the NBN Co will roll out fibre in Broken Hill. We assume the satellite commissioning is still 2015 and that the majority of the rural areas in Far West NSW will receive satellite. We would like to highlight for the awareness of the Joint Committee that without ability to plan for the actual rollout of fibre in Broken Hill, there is ongoing, unnecessary expenditure on short term solutions that mining companies and other businesses could not normally justify. This additional expenditure erodes competitiveness and productivity. However, these businesses are compelled to pursue these solutions to continue to operate. It is also relevant to remind the Joint Committee that our smaller towns, namely Wilcannia, Tibooburra, Menindee and Ivanhoe, could very well also benefit from fibre if cable has been put in the ground at some time in the past, for other purposes. It makes sense for the NBN Co to understand what cabling is already in the ground and whether or not it can be accessed and used in the broader rollout program.

During the Joint Committee's 16 April 2012 public hearing in Sydney, the NBN Co CEO Mike Quigley and the Department of Broadband Communications and Digital Economy Secretary Peter Harris answered a series of questions concerning the rollout in Broken Hill, and ultimately they agreed to provide further information on the timing of the rollout, and clarify the location of the point of interconnect. They agreed to clarify the circumstances and confusion surrounding the



ability of the NBN Co to connect itself to the newly installed regional backbone blackspot program cabling from Mildura to Broken Hill, but not the city. This must surely have been embarrassing for the NBN Co but mostly, it was an incredibly disappointing revelation for the businesses and service providers, residents and others in the community. Please ensure that our community can be given the answers. Mostly, we want to understand the timing of the rollout as this is costing businesses with every additional month and year of delay.

Also, please be alert to this feedback received in our organisation concerning that the value of spend on NBN Co marketing via print and broadcast media to promote the service. In general, people feel it is excessive and probably verging on wasteful. These funds may be better directed to programs that will help communities bridge the digital divide so that technology truly can enable business and personal growth and development.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the great preparations that have been made in our community to welcome high speed broadband to our region. We have our strategy for the Far West and Broken Hill's digital future online at [www.digitalfarwestnsw.com.au](http://www.digitalfarwestnsw.com.au) and we are pursuing the itemised actions within our strategy with urgency. Our region is ready for the technology and welcomes the growth opportunities it will enable.

Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Yours faithfully



Terry Smith  
Chair  
Regional Development Australia Far West  
**encls**

