Why Mandurah needs the National Broadband Network

Submission to
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Infrastructure and Communications:
Inquiry into the National Broadband Network

February 2011

Introduction

The City of Mandurah welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications' *Inquiry into the National Broadband Network*. The City understands that the purpose of the Inquiry is to examine the capacity of the National Broadband Network to contribute to a range of government, non-government and private sector programs that would help to facilitate the delivery of enhanced economic and social outcomes for our communities.

Background

The City of Mandurah is Australia's fastest growing regional city. It is currently Western Australia's 8th fastest growing Local Government Area, and the 11th fastest growing LGA in Australia. Mandurah is currently experiencing 5-year (2004-2009) average annual growth of 4.5%, compared with the WA average of 2.5%, and national average of 1.8%.[1] Mandurah's current population exceeds 70,000, and is forecast to reach between 105,000 and 116,000 by 2031[2].

Due to its long-term rapid growth, Mandurah is faced with a range of socio-economic challenges, including an ageing population, a low proportion of young people, high unemployment and poor education outcomes. It also suffers from poor employment capacity in the professional services industries, and an over-reliance on retail sector, manufacturing and construction industry employment.

When combined, these factors point to a high level of local employment vulnerability, a situation that has been exacerbated by the recent economic downturn and a lack of serviced industrial land. Despite these challenges, the City is making steady progress in establishing itself as a self-sufficient regional city – the *Southern City*.

Mandurah's Southern City Strategy

Adopted by Council in November 2008, the City of Mandurah's *Southern City Strategy* is designed to reverse Mandurah's historically high unemployment levels, primarily by diversifying its employment base and significantly enhancing and diversifying its education opportunities. The Strategy aims to ensure that Mandurah residents can continue to live, learn and work locally, rather than commuting to Perth, by enhancing secondary and tertiary education opportunities, and creating additional 'high-end' local jobs within Mandurah and the Peel Region.

The Strategy also seeks to position Mandurah as the 'economic anchor' to the south of Perth. As part of this process, quality education and training, and a dynamic tertiary sector are integral to the *Southern City Strategy*.

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[1]Australian Bureau of Statistics – *Regional Population Growth Australia 2008-09;* 30 March 2010
[2] Informed Decisions; *City of Mandurah Population Forecast;* March 2009: Western Australian Planning Commission*; South Metropolitan and Peel Sub-Regional Structure Plan*; June 2009

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A number of recent consultancies have recommended that the City of Mandurah engage the tertiary sector to explore opportunities for collaborative approaches to expand the Peel Region's education, training, and research and development (R&D) capacity. Potential exists to establish a variety of local course initiatives, including:

- Environment/Natural Resource Management
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Marine/Boating and Leisure
- Engineering – Construction and Fabrication
- Visual/Performing/Creative Arts
- Mining and Exploration
- Renewable Energy
- Agriculture/Aquaculture/Aquaponics/Agri-Business
- Tourism/Eco-Tourism.

The various consultancies also recommended that the City identify locations to host (incubate) innovative technology companies, and to identify industries with genuine cluster potential. Suggested industries included engineering, marine, agriculture and aquaculture, and tourism. Also recommended was the establishment of a major regional university presence.

Peel Regional University

Mandurah currently lacks tertiary education diversity, and R&D capability. Local educational and research delivery does not directly meet the needs of the Region's existing technology-based industries, nor does it fulfil an innovation/R&D role.

Opportunities exist for 'venture by design' university partnerships, whereby universities and technology-based industries form a partnership to pursue export opportunities and regional economic development in local industry sectors that possess a natural competitive advantage.

Potential locations for a regional university campus include the Peel Education and TAFE Campus, Mandurah City Centre, and Mandurah Civic & Cultural Precinct. Modern campuses can be small-scale, multi-storey and co-located with other uses, e.g. arts/culture, government administration, and commercial/professional.

The City's economic development focus is currently centred on two main areas, the Mandurah City Centre/Civic and Cultural Precinct, and Nambeelup Industrial Estate.

Mandurah City Centre Precinct Plan

In June 2010, the City of Mandurah released its revised draft *Mandurah City Centre Precinct Plan* for public comment. The *City Centre Precinct Plan* aims to enhance Mandurah's City Centre, with greater mixed-use commercial and office space, as well as entertainment, residential, tourism and cultural uses. In addition to boosting tourism and local amenity, the Precinct Plan seeks to attract both private and public sector agencies to 'set up shop' in the Mandurah CBD, and promote it as an affordable waterfront alternative to the Perth City Centre.

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Mandurah Civic and Cultural Precinct Plan

The draft Civic and Cultural Precinct Plan, released in June 2007, encompasses the following land uses – Commercial, Residential, Tourism, Retail, Cultural/Arts, Civic, and Parking. Education is also a potential consideration, as a 'niche' R&D university campus.

Potential site-use options include a visual and digital arts venue (MPAC extension), commercial space, government office space, decked parking, niche university or Marine TAFE campus (waterways & marine industry R&D focus), and Peel Waterways Institute site. In addition to its tourism (arts/culture) focus, an expanded Civic and Cultural Precinct would fulfill local needs (e.g. youth, arts/culture, music and entertainment, education and training needs).

Nambeelup Industrial Estate

The City of Mandurah and other Peel Region Councils are seeking a State Government commitment to the timely release of serviced industrial land at Nambeelup, adjacent to the New Perth-Bunbury Highway within the Shire of Murray. Industrial land within Mandurah is now at capacity, with no further room for expansion. Without the release of new large-scale serviced industrial areas adjacent to Mandurah, local Peel industries such as engineering, warehousing/logistics and agribusiness cannot sufficiently expand.

In addition to facilitating new industrial land releases at Nambeelup, adequate utilities - including water, sewerage, power, natural gas and high-speed telecommunications - will be required to ensure that the new industrial area responds to the needs of businesses and industries that locate there.

Why Mandurah Needs Broadband

Apart from the obvious health and social benefits that the NBN would provide, such as greatly improved telehealth, teleconferencing, video streaming, and general telephony and broadband, the introduction of the NBN to Mandurah and the Peel Region would significantly enhance the *Southern City Strategy's* goal of new business/industry and tertiary education attraction.

In addition to its proposed business/industry attraction role, the City is keen to explore the option of establishing a local data centre that would cater to the data storage/retrieval and business continuity needs of government agencies, tertiary institutions, private sector companies, and neighbouring Councils. By offering a reliable, high-speed and broad bandwidth data centre capability, the City would be able to offer both quality waterfront/CBD land and state-of-the-art communications technology to prospective organisations. Furthermore, it would potentially allow the provision of Managed Services, a rapidly emerging worldwide trend whereby organisations hire specific IT software, rather than purchase it outright.

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The timing of the NBN rollout is particularly fortuitous, as the City is currently seeking to entice the Western Australian Government to relocate some of its public sector workforce to regional areas. Regionalisation of the public sector workforce would assist Mandurah to assume a 'service-city' role, providing Peel Region industry sectors with convenient access to State agencies located in Mandurah, whilst also reducing high Government agency tenancy costs in the Perth CBD.

Conclusion

The City of Mandurah is fully supportive of the Australian Government's intended National Broadband Network rollout, and has already met with NBN representatives to determine potential Mandurah coverage areas. It is our view that the rollout will help the City to achieve many of its socio-economic goals, which are also the objectives of the NBN program. These include:

- Positive impacts on regional economic growth and employment opportunities
- Enhanced business efficiencies and revenues, particularly for small and medium businesses, and Australia's export market
- Greater interaction with research and development and related innovation organisations
- Improved delivery of government services and programs
- Enhanced educational resources and training available for teachers and students
- Greater capacity to manage built and natural resources, and to promote environmental sustainability
- Improved health outcomes; and
- Greater community and social benefits.

The City of Mandurah eagerly anticipates the rollout of the National Broadband Network, and the improved triple-bottom line outcomes that it will help deliver to Mandurah and the broader Peel Region.

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