



Submission for :

Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network

This submission addresses the terms of reference:

Examining the capacity for the National Broadband Network to contribute to:

c) improving the educational resources and training available for teachers and students

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Introduction

In late 2009 a research project was established with researchers Prof Joan Abbott-Chapman, Prof Jane Watson, and Dr Sue Stack from the Faculty of Education to examine the implications of the NBN for education in Tasmania. 20 interviews were conducted of key leaders in educational institutions across Tasmania:

- University of Tasmania
- Department of Education
- Independent and Catholic Schools
- Polytechnic (incorporating the previous TAFE insitution)
- Skills Tasmania
- Community Knowledge Network (libraries and access centres)

The interviews revealed that there was deep concern about the implications of the NBN with many issues to be considered. These issues were analysed and developed by the research team into frameworks to help thinking about the complex interaction of the issues, and the underpinning and often competing values .The interviewees along with other key leaders in their organizations were invited to an expert forum in December 2010 to collectively explore the issues and to devise further actions.

Recommendations by the expert forum:

1. A systemic approach is required. Multiple perspectives , issues, stakeholders, and values need to be considered. The issues are inter-related and simple solutions are not necessarily the answer and can be counter-productive if they don't address fundamental issues.

The research provides an important back-story for any decision-making. A detailed report of the findings of the research project will be released soon. A summary of the core perspectives and some of the issues is in Appendix 1. The website <http://tasnbn.wetpaint.com/> contains the interim research outcomes, analyses, emerging questions and issues as well as interview summaries.

2. The expert forum brought together a group of leaders across educational institutions in Tasmania who see the potential for a “connected” education sector and are committed to facilitating this. This informal group has indicated that they are available for consultation or mobilisation to consider particular issues. This group can be brought together as a think-tank to look at cross sector systemic solutions, or sought individually for advice regarding issues pertinent to their sector or institution. Collectively these leaders represent key perspectives that need to be considered when looking for systemic solutions. A list of key leaders can be provided.
3. To facilitate a cross-sector approach to issues and maintain networking, the expert forum has recommended the appointment of a Cross-sector liaison specialist. This would be similar to the role of Derek Wenmoth in the New Zealand education network – KAREN (<http://karen.net.nz>)
4. A key issue identified by the expert forum is the lack of awareness of teachers, businesses, parents, and the community of the affordances of the new *ICT / teaching and learning / connectivity* nexus. A whole of government/education approach could be used to communicate for cultural change.

Appendix 1 –

Key Perspectives and their issues that need to be considered when exploring implication of NBN for education

