

21st February, 2011.

Mr Andrew McGowan
Inquiry Secretary
Standing Committee on Infrastructure & Communications
House of Representatives
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Andrew

Re: New Enquiry into the National Broadband Network

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Moreton Bay would like to thank the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications for the opportunity to present a submission in relation to the inquiry into the capacity of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

This submission is split into two sections – **General Comments** and **Specific Comments** to address the points listed in the invitation to submit a submission dated 9th December, 2010.

General Comments:

Value of the Inquiry:

During consultations in regard to this inquiry the consensus view is that the Australian Government has previously identified the benefits of the National Broadband Network and its ability to enhance communications through dramatically enhanced bandwidth. Further this was outlined in the business case behind the decision to invest \$38bn to ensure the delivery of the National Broadband Network.

NBN Content in current Australian Government Strategic Documents:

The Discussion Paper – *Our Cities – A national strategy for the future of Australian Cities* produced by the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, indicates that the roll-out of high speed broadband is expected to:

- Improve the productivity of Australian businesses, allow them to expand their customer base and grow revenues, regardless of their location
- Enhance education, health and other service delivery for all Australians regardless of location
- Connect our cities and regional centres nationally and globally
- Facilitate greater take up of teleworking, which in turn, allows workplace flexibility, eases traffic congestion and enhances regional employment opportunities
- Allows the use of smart technology to better manage our natural resources, infrastructure and issues such as congestion.

The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy:

This department and the associated website clearly articulate the capacity of the National Broadband Network to deliver against the points listed in the letter inviting submissions dated 9th December, 2010.



When will the NBN be rolled out across the Moreton Bay Region?

The feedback through discussions to support the development of this submission clearly indicated that as a region we need to know when the NBN will be rolled out so that preparations can be made to raise awareness.

Further rounds of Release Sites:

Regional Development Australia Moreton Bay is interested in the timing of any future phases of release sites and the process for registering expressions of interest.

Technology Advancement:

Australia requires a broadband network to ensure its place as one of the worlds' advanced economic nations. This is regardless of the debate around fibre versus wireless or a combination of the two. The reality is that this infrastructure will be managing and delivering applications in 2-5 years+ time which are not currently available and on which business and residents will increasingly depend.

The debate is not over saving seconds on downloading 'Facebook' for example but should focus on the NBN being the enabling technology for a nation moving through and beyond the current technological revolution, in the same way water ways, railways and roads were developed during the industrial revolution. Who would have predicted the current uses and demands placed on the road and rail networks when construction commenced during the initial phases of the industrial revolution.

Broadband Today (www.broadbandtoday.com.au):

This is an initiative led by the Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) as part its **Digital Economy Plan**. There are many initiatives that can be implemented by local governments to drive uptake of the NBN and create the Economy of the 21st century. By preparing a site for many local governments to collaborate and communicate their local initiatives, SCC hope's to promote the development of locally developed intellectual property that can be shared and transferred to other localities to build a digital economy and using Broadband Today.

A number of Councils have been meeting and sharing knowledge on the NBN, Broadband and the Digital Economy since the announcement of the NBN. Some 34 local governments have been proactively identifying ways to ensure that their communities benefit from both the roll out of the NBN infrastructure, but equally the opportunity for their businesses and residents to access new markets and compete internationally in a way not previously possible. The 34 foundation Councils currently represent a population base of 4.5 million or 1 in 5 Australians.

Specific Comments:

The following is a summary of consultation outcomes and indicates in dot point format how the NBN will contribute towards the specific points covered by the 'New Inquiry into the National Broadband Network'.

The delivery of government services and programs:

- Improve the connectivity and reliability of on line communication with both government and non-government organisations
- Enhanced delivery of online services and programs, generating associated efficiencies
- Benefit communities in disaster events in terms of improved response times and associated government and emergency service response times.

Achieving health outcomes:

- Delivery of online consultations and services.

Improving the educational resources and training available for teachers and students:

It is my understanding that the NBN VET Sector committee has already captured the gains for the education and training sector as a result of the roll out of the NBN.

- Enhance the delivery of online courses and student resources
- Enhance educational and training delivery to rural and remote areas
- Provide significant flexibility of delivery so that individuals can learn at home at a time which fits with other aspects of their lives
- Video conferencing will also support virtual classrooms and online collaboration between students and teachers / lecturers
- Libraries and resource centres could also become on line resources
- It would support the development of a learning environment which is highly interactive and engaging. Improved opportunities for communication, interaction and collaboration will also aid the engagement of mature age learners
- Enhance the delivery of programs to broaden the opportunity for online learning making education and training more accessible to fit in with work and family life patterns and residential location
- Support the attainment of targets to increase retention rates at years 10 and 12
- Increase the numbers of Australian's participating in education and training, and obtaining degree level qualifications, including those from disadvantaged and indigenous communities
- The above will assist to increase participation and productivity rates within the economy.

The management of Australia's built and natural resources and environmental sustainability:

- The NBN will have a significant impact on the management of Australia's built and natural resources and environmental sustainability through the use of 'Smart' technology, and through the opportunities included in this submission. The NBN and technology as a whole provides the current generation with opportunities to significantly improve environmental sustainability, reduce waste and the use of natural resources, thereby reducing the nations carbon footprint.

Impacting regional economic growth and employment opportunities:

- Enhance economic growth by improving the connectivity and competitiveness of Australia's regions
- Provide opportunities for new and emerging business sectors providing jobs and developing skills for the future
- Employment opportunities will be enhanced by enabling residents to generate self employment opportunities and to work remotely regardless of location thereby accessing wider employment opportunities without the need to relocate
- New businesses could locate in regional areas and operate successful through the opportunity created by the NBN
- Telecommuting and more flexible working will be more accessible reducing the need and the cost of the daily commute. The benefits of telecommuting and the NBN have been identified by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

Impacting business efficiencies and revenues, particularly for small and medium business, and Australia's export market:

- The business benefits and opportunities provided by the NBN for business are clearly articulated on the following website www.digitalbusiness.gov.au developed by the Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy. This website also includes case studies
- The big challenge will be to measure productivity and economic gains generated by businesses which are using or move to using technology via the NBN. The second major challenge will be to work with business, especially small business to convert them to using applications and technology via the NBN. State Government Departments, Local Government, RDA's and Chambers of Commerce should be working together to build business and community awareness of the opportunities and benefits provided by the NBN
- Higher bandwidth, high speed communication and increased capacity will enable businesses to generate revenue savings through the use of technology
- The use of tele-conferencing for example will reduce export costs
- Open up new markets for Australian exporters and will enable more businesses to trade internationally online through the global market place. However, this also opens up new markets for overseas businesses in Australia

- Australian businesses could also lose business due to the ability of customers to buy overseas. Fluctuations in the value of the Australian \$ against other currencies, and the current limits on the application of GST to online overseas purchases, will make online purchasing from overseas increasingly attractive, negatively impacting on Australia businesses.

Interaction with research and development and related innovation investments:

- R&D, innovation, collaboration and competitiveness will be aided significantly through the NBN infrastructure.

Facilitating community and social benefits:

- The benefits for the Not For Profit (NFP) sector will vary as they will for business and they will vary subject to the objectives of the organisation. Many NFP's rely on volunteers and may struggle to identify a resource to develop and manage an on line presence. Again www.digitalbusiness.gov.au has started to include content for NFP's
- NFP's rely more and more on informal and collaborative service delivery. On line collaboration and access to shared information will be highly beneficial to clients, promoting service efficiencies
- Increased productivity in serving the needs of the community
- A clear need to avoid socially disadvantaged residents and communities becoming further disconnected through the lack of access to the NBN through cost for example
- There will be positive social impacts in rural and isolated areas – reduce isolation and increase access to services required for a quality of life – health, education, and learning. It will also benefit social connection and communication for those in isolated areas. This will have a flow on to improved health, including mental health outcomes
- Young people are connected to technology and the ability to have faster and easier and wider use will benefit young people and their learning, social connection and employment options
- Social connection benefits through improved service and capability – improvement to what we are already seeing – virtual communities - unconstrained by time and geography
- The ability to connect quickly in emergency/disaster situations will be a major benefit in particular for isolated areas without adequate communications currently.

The optimal capacity and the technological requirements of a network to deliver these outcomes:

- Not qualified to provide a response.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission and the Moreton Bay region is looking forward to the roll out of the NBN and in particular the opportunity for the region to be included in further release sites.

For further information in regard to this submission, please contact Andrew Quain, Executive Officer, RDA Moreton Bay by telephone on _____ or by email: _____

Yours sincerely

Neil Hoddinett
Chair
RDA Moreton Bay