



Logan office of Economic Development

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Parliament of Australia  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Infrastructure & Communications  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Attention: Mr Andrew McGowan, Inquiry Secretary

Subject: New Inquiry into The National Broadband Network (NBN)

Dear Mr McGowan

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments from Logan City Council (LCC) on the capacity of the NBN to contribute to various aspects of community life. We have canvassed opinions within Council as well as seeking input from the wider Logan community, particularly our various chambers of commerce. We also refer to the relevant study *Connecting Communities ~ the Impact of Broadband On Communities In the UK and Its Implications for Australia*.

Following are our comments with regard to the NBN having the ability to contribute to:

**a) The delivery of government services and programs**

LCC believes it is essential to have affordable high speed broadband to deliver an increasing array of services to our customers both urban and rural as well as to interact with our suppliers eg online services. Although LCC would try to provide choice to customers in mode of service, increasingly customers seem to be seeking the convenience of online services eg developers and investors with respect to online development applications.



Online services can not only mean potential convenience for the customer but lower cost and efficiency for Council. The NBN offers the possibility of affordable high speed broadband capability to both urban and rural customers which are often not possible with the existing telecommunications network. The NBN could prove even more effective and efficient for government when coupled with outsourced data centres in cloud computing configurations.

*Connecting Communities* demonstrated how ever faster broadband is improving public service outcomes and the relationship between citizens and governments. It is about inclusion for all citizens in the global information/knowledge economy within a digital services context.

#### **b) Achieving health outcomes**

The NBN provides the potential to achieve outstanding outcomes in the area of health such as advanced home health monitoring. This is becoming more critical with an ageing population and escalating hospital and medical costs.

*Connecting Communities* study showed for example in care of the elderly the vital role 'telecare' can play. It enabled millions to stay in their communities, lead independent and sociable lives, making huge savings in medical costs whilst strengthening family cohesion.

#### **c) Improving the educational resources and training available for teachers and students**

Due to factors such as the need for rising levels of education and training, indeed for life-long learning, as well as job/career mobility, it is imperative that Australia has world class telecommunications to support a flexible learning process for both teachers and students. Affordable high speed broadband is a fundamental prerequisite on campus, at home and in the office. To achieve optimal results the broadband facilities and services must be ubiquitous nationally. The NBN potentially provides that ubiquitous national building block which of course will be augmented with complementary services such as wi fi, wi max and mobile/wireless broadband eg flexible access around a university or TAFE campus.

*Connecting Communities* report concluded that the well planned and discerning application of high speed broadband was transforming education in the UK. For instance, results improved by two grades and difficult to reach kids got switched on - particularly if they had access to broadband devices at both home and school. A new education service has enabled parents to apply for school places online, reducing costs and disagreements.



**d) The management of Australia's built and natural resources and environmental sustainability**

High speed broadband is vital to the management of our built and natural resources and to enabling ongoing environmental sustainability initiatives. For example, high speed broadband can facilitate monitoring for climate change globally including sharing of data for modelling and forecasting changes as well as taking necessary remedial action and assessing outcomes. Even in the home, broadband could facilitate home automation (HA) systems to assist in managing energy (eg switching from grid to self-generated renewable energy), managing water (eg switching from utility grid to stored water). Beyond that the HA system linked to broadband could also provide a range of other home services such as remote video surveillance for home security. Affordable high speed broadband will of course facilitate teleworking/telecommuting which in turn offers the associated benefits of flexible work options as well as reducing traffic congestion and emissions. Similarly, a range of resource management tools could be supported in Intelligent Buildings (office or residential) in consort with high speed broadband.

The NBN promises to be an affordable high speed broadband network which will be ubiquitous nationally to rural as well as urban areas to all Australian premises. This critical infrastructure would provide an outstanding asset for use in monitoring and managing our built and natural resources. It should also prove to be a catalyst to pioneering initiatives in environmental sustainability.

*Connecting Communities* study found that teleconferencing and teleworking were already reducing emissions and congestion as well as supporting greater community involvement in environmental issues.

**e) Impacting regional economic growth and employment opportunities**

Successful implementation of the NBN could potentially have a colossal impact on regional economic growth and employment opportunities. In one sense the NBN potentially provides the enabling technology for almost every industry to leap forward in some aspect of their business be it productivity, marketing/export, supply chain, communication, etc. The NBN is a fundamental building block for a Digital Economy which in turn is an integral aspect of moving towards a Knowledge Economy. Affordable high speed broadband is regarded as key infrastructure in the Logan City Economic Development Strategy and its strategic direction to a higher level Knowledge Economy. It is also the essential ingredient in the evolving Logan City Digital Economy Strategy. Successful building and operation of the NBN should also produce enormous export potential in its own right in terms of both products and services eg consulting to other countries on network planning, construction and operation as well as new applications.



**f) Impacting business efficiencies and revenues, particularly for small and medium business and Australia's export market**

The NBN has the potential to have a tremendously positive impact on business efficiencies and revenues, especially for small to medium firms. Because the NBN will cover both rural as well as urban, there will be the possibility of world class yet affordable high speed broadband for every business in Australia. It will even more than the UK overcome the 'tyranny of distance'. This need for affordable high speed broadband is particularly pertinent to home based businesses (HBB), a category of SMEs which is enormous and growing rapidly. Beyond that telecommuting/teleworking requires affordable high speed broadband to support this mode of work which provides flexible working options whilst inter alia reducing road congestion, emissions and excessive energy consumption.

It should be noted that the full potential of the NBN will only be realized if the network building is augmented by Digital Economy training programs to demonstrate the possible uses and applications of the network and associated retail services running off the NBN. Such educational programs should encompass all segments of society both business and community. The goal should be digital inclusiveness with tailored usefulness.

The NBN offers the possibility of enhanced export potential for almost every industry in Logan City. As mentioned above, the successful planning, building and operating of the NBN potentially opens export doors in a range of industry sectors located in Logan City.

**g) Interaction with research and development (R &D) and related innovation investments**

Affordable high speed broadband is critical to the R& D and innovation processes at the local, State, national and international level. As mentioned in d) above, such broadband infrastructure and applications are vital to management of Australia's and the world's built and natural resources and environmental sustainability. Broadband is essential in medical research, health and wellness particularly in the arena of home health care and monitoring. Current telecommunications deficiencies are reflected for example in the Meadowbrook area of Logan City where the Logan Hospital has a high level of telecommunications facilities yet in the adjacent residential area it is impossible and/or costly to get mere ADSL. The current situation is not tenable for a so-called Clever Country and Smart State.

High speed broadband is also necessary if we are to improve the interaction between industry and our tertiary bodies and other research institutions such as CSIRO. Such affordable broadband infrastructure must extend not only to large businesses but also to SMEs, the engine room for future growth, and to the home to facilitate more flexible working options. The NBN offers the solution to meeting the need for



ubiquitous and affordable broadband infrastructure to both urban and rural areas and to both large and small businesses.

#### **h) Facilitating community and social benefits**

In a nation so vast as Australia with such low population and residential densities, the ability of the NBN to provide immense community and social benefits should be readily apparent. NBN promises the potential for affordable high speed broadband in urban, rural and remote areas within a relatively short time frame. Telstra in effect promised this sort of national network some 15 years ago but arguably has largely failed to deliver. Even though Logan City is in a metro area, a large portion is rural after the recent amalgamation so is confronted with rural communication issues as well as deficiencies in the urban setting.

*Connecting Communities* report by its very name identifies significant benefits of ever faster broadband for UK communities in terms of: health (telehealth), care of the elderly, disabled and isolated (telecare), environment, education (telelearning/distance education), public service efficiencies and effectiveness, etc. As the report highlights, the building of a 'network' such as NBN is essential, but the real prize is a 'networked society'. The report further concludes that as bandwidth and speed increase then so do community and social benefits.... provided the network is ubiquitous, there is equality of access, and equality of skills in being able to access.

#### **i) The optimal capacity and technological requirements of a network to deliver these outcomes**

The performance characteristics of the NBN as proposed appear to be adequate within the 8 year time frame to build a national ubiquitous network. However, the performance potential should be scalable upwards given the expected trend for higher speeds and bandwidth as consumers discover how to use the network and the applications flowing from it. There should be the ability for wireless and satellite designated areas to be potentially upgraded to fibre within certain cost/price parameters and a resolution of the issue as to who pays for upgrades. Clarification is necessary with regard to the Universal Service Obligation (USO) arrangements and the transitional transfer from Telstra to NBN Co or USO Co. Clarification and agreement is required on requirements within buildings both new and existing, especially multiple dwelling units (MDUs) eg Foxtel required of Telstra for MDU buildings to have backbone cabling as well as facility cabling to facilitate effective marketing and operational needs and not to just single access point on the exterior.

Yours Sincerely

David van den Brule  
Economic Development Manager