



## Submission 031

Date received: 18/02/2011

# McKINLAY SHIRE COUNCIL

CIVIC CENTRE, JULIA CREEK

Correspondence to be  
addressed to  
The Chief Executive Officer,  
P.O. Box 177,  
Julia Creek, Q. 4823  
TELEPHONE: (07) 4746 7166  
FAX: (07) 4746 7549  
EMAIL: reception@mckinlay.qld.gov.au

17 February 2011

Mr Andrew McGowan  
Inquiry Secretary  
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications  
lc.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Andrew

### Inquiry into the National Broadband Network

I refer to your letter of 9 December 2010 where your committee was charged with examining the capacity of the national Broadband Network to contribute to the nine matters raised in your letter. The following response has been prepared.

In response to this submission we must at the outset express our concern that McKinlay Shire is one of only two communities between Townsville and Mount Isa that are not to be connected to the NBN even though the infrastructure will traverse the towns of Julia Creek and Richmond.

With respect to the specifics of the NBN line through Julia Creek, the optical fibre cable runs parallel to the CBD only 100 metres away and through the Julia Creek township. It will be hard to build any substantive and credible argument to support the Government's current position regarding the omission of Julia Creek from the NBN network especially as geographically the optical fibre line runs through Julia Creek and communicated regularly by the Prime Minister that the government is committed to the benefits of equity of service across Australia irrespective of where you live

We therefore request reconsideration to enable all the communities of the North West Clean Energy Corridor and North West Minerals Province to be provided with access to the National Broadband Network to ensure equity across the region. The submission has been prepared on the assumption that McKinlay Shire is to be connected to the NBN.

1. The delivery of government services and programs

The provision of NBN to our small towns will greatly assist in reducing the tyranny of distance, in that video conferencing can be held between local government in the North West and other government agencies. Furthermore, staff undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships will have greater interaction with online features of their schooling. Not only will this encourage learning of their trade, it will also build their IT skills.

2. Achieving health outcomes

The Julia Creek Hospital is staffed by a full time GP position. Members of the community are required to travel 250km to Mount Isa or 650km to Townsville to receive medical

**"GATEWAY TO THE GULF"**

## Submission 031

Date received: 18/02/2011

services from specialists. The NBN could enhance medical services through the virtual appointment of specialist services at the Julia Creek.

3. Improving the educational resources and training available for teachers and students

NBN will greatly improve tertiary correspondence, enhance secondary studies promoting middle school, and can be used to further expand the effectiveness of apprentice and TAFE style learning in rural remote Australia.

It is foreseeable that the current Mount Isa School of the Air would be able to convert from airwaves to broadband but would be unable to do so unless the McKinlay and Richmond Shire children have access to the same technology.

The children at the Julia Creek State School should also have access to the NBN to assist in education , research and homework irrespective of the population size of the community. Access to the NBN will provide students with web based interactive lessons involving real-time voice and data transmission. With the NBN it is a possibility that secondary education via the internet could be reintroduced as an educational alternative for parents preferring to home-school, rather than having their children attend boarding school. With the ever advancing online applications and web sites, the NBN will be imperative for education and skill building as we move further into the technological age.

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

The resource rich McKinlay Shire is part of the North West Minerals Province and Northern Economic Triangle . Connection to the NBN will greatly improve communications between the resource operations and their administrative bases located on the eastern seaboard for the efficient recovery of resources. Projects like the Copperstring Initiative will further enhance the region and open doors for sustainable power generation in the area, including the geothermal potential in the Millungera Basin. Security of this natural will result in growth to both the areas working and resident population.

5. Impacting regional economic growth and employment opportunities

Providing access to the NBN will allow the community to improve both social and educational interaction, enhance tourism opportunity improving economic growth and employment opportunities. It will support initiatives contained in the State Government's Northwest Regional Plan. The retention and attraction of population is also an overarching vision for the McKinlay Shire 10 year Community Plan. Tourism is an emerging and important industry for McKinlay Shire. As travelers move across the Overlander's Way, they support the small businesses while enjoying our attractions. The Queensland Government Inquiry into Grey Nomad tourism found that grey nomads are becoming increasingly "technologically savvy", relying heavily on the internet to assist with trip planning during their holiday. The NBN will deliver reliable broadband coverage, an important factor for grey nomads when choosing accommodation along the way. The Overlander's Way committee is currently promoting the North West, with Julia Creek and Richmond as the centerpiece. The NBN will greatly assist in increasing tourism to the region.

6. Impacting business efficiencies and revenues, particularly for small and medium businesses, and Australia's export market

McKinlay Shire landholders are key exporters of cattle. The shire hosts small to medium size beef producers all negotiating best prices for their products. Granting access to the

NBN will not only assist them to compete effectively for the best price per head of cattle but provide a greater opportunity for producers to appreciate and evolve with policy change associated with issues such as sustainability, climate change and industry best practice.

For six months of the year tourism plays a significant role for small and medium businesses in Julia Creek. With the addition of the NBN, travelers are more likely to stay to complete their errands, thus benefitting small businesses with the flow on effect. Small businesses will use the NBN to connect with coastal counterparts, ensuring efficiency and competitiveness of pricing.

7. Interaction with research and development and related innovation investments

McKinlay Shire has a vision for guiding beef producers through the new economy and ensuring that its economy is sustainable. Providing access to new technologies will reduce the cost of doing business. Similarly the NBN has a vision of improving innovation investments at any location in Australia. It would be unfortunate for McKinlay Shire not to be a part of the success story of the NBN in the future.

8. Facilitating community and social benefits

McKinlay Shire forms part of the tourist mecca for the myriad of grey nomad tourists. Securing the NBN for McKinlay Shire would mean that tourism generally and the transient grey nomad population can benefit from unbelievably fast transactions through the NBN network. Furthermore, the NBN will supply faster connections for residents wishing to communicate visually with family and friends, through media sources such as Skype. Although McKinlay Shire's physical location may place large distances between loved ones, the NBN will assist in eliminating this void. Irrespective of our remote location, residents of McKinlay Shire deserve equity of service.

9. The optimal capacity and technological requirements of a network to delivers these outcomes.

In 2009, a media release by the then Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd on the matter, claimed that the NBN would deliver download speeds that are 8 times faster than technologies currently used across McKinlay Shire today. This sort of capacity improvement would provide the ideal mechanism for the delivery of the benefits detailed above.

For further information, please contact me on \_\_\_\_\_

Yours faithfully

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Tim Vollmer**  
Acting Chief Executive Officer