

COFFS HARBOUR CITY COUNCIL



Our ref: 2667263

24 February 2011

Mr Andrew McGowan
Inquiry Secretary
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: ic.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr McGowan

New Inquiry into the National Broadband Network

Thank you for your letter dated 9 December 2010 addressed to the Mayor who has asked me to respond on his behalf. We would also like to thank you for the opportunity to provide our views on the impact of the capacity of the National Broadband Network in our region.

Council has also contributed responses to this inquiry in conjunction with the Mid North Coast branch of Regional Development Australia and Southern Cross University submissions.

In addition to that broader paper, Council would like to respond to four (4) points as they refer particularly to our Coffs Harbour 2030 Strategic Plan which was developed in broad consultation with the community in 2008 and remains our blueprint for development.

a) The delivery of government services and programs

The NBN roll-out will support Council's civic responsibility to deliver services and programs as described in the Coffs Harbour 2030 Strategic Plan. High speed broadband is seen as crucial to Council's ability to promote innovative sustainable business and industry within a strong and diverse local economy, a stated outcome of the 2030 Plan.

b) Achieving health outcomes

Another of Council's objectives is "... that our community is caring and connected with strong communication and understanding". We see the NBN roll-out as assisting in achieving this objective by providing improved communications within our community and to access wider national and international resources such as emergency services and health professionals utilising videolink and other technologies.

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Attracting more health professionals to the region is a specific need which Council is addressing. We believe that the provision of high speed internet in the region will assist us in this undertaking as it will provide increased opportunity for professional development which is often stated as an impediment to locating to rural areas.

e) Impacting regional economic growth and employment opportunities

Another of our 2030 Strategic Plans objectives is to " ... promote a strong and diverse economy, providing a wide range of rewarding employment opportunities which are available to all".

Several of our local industries have expressed their need for high speed broadband to enable them to operate effectively in today's international economy. High speed Internet access is critical to businesses who, for example need to host data live from the field using IP modems, and is crucial for management of infrastructure and maintaining safety.

Locally, business function is severely impaired with organisations unable to compete in the international market because of the restrictive nature of current internet capacity. Business is unable to adequately utilise such technology as transferring large amounts of data, video conferencing, working from home and VOIP.

Improved broadband will particularly assist creative media industries who need to transfer large video files overseas.

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

Our Strategic Plan aspires to build a community which is " ... healthy, informed and engaged". We see the NBN as crucial to the delivery of this outcome. Within Council's own infrastructure, there are several "Black spots" which means that in addition to the broader population being unable to communicate adequately, council's staff are put at risk by the inability to communicate while working in those areas. We are anxious to access the technology which will alleviate these circumstances, and provide a safer environment for our people.

In summary, Coffs Harbour City Council supports improved broadband in our LGA and our local industries are keen to take advantage of the business opportunities that improvements in technology present for the future of our region.

I look forward to hearing the outcomes and recommendations of the inquiry, and hope that our access to NBN will be available in the near future.

Yours faithfully

Jennifer M Oloman
Manager, Economic Development