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SUBMISSION TO NBN JOINT COMMITTEE

Edgnett Regional Computer Services has provided IT Services industry to local businesses for 15 years. Edgnett provides IT support for many businesses in Broken Hill, from micro size to significant mining companies. We have become increasingly aware of the disparity of IT services available to Western NSW compared to our counterparts in the capital cities. One of our Senior Technicians and Project Manager has recently joined us from Sydney from a similar position in Sydney and has been amazed at Internet services disparity available in Broken Hill.

As we have firsthand knowledge of the available IT services to our clients, we have compiled some examples for you to consider in regards to the deployment of the NBN to Broken Hill.

Example One:

A medical practice in Broken Hill has expanded and now has two office locations separated by only one block. They are on the same street, but having a LAN or WAN connection between the two buildings using the existing infrastructure is proving to be extremely difficult and expensive. As the primary software tool is a database, the speed in which practitioners can look up patient histories, X-rays, specialist reports, prepare prescriptions is integral to the success of the solution.

Currently we are preparing a radio link proposal for the two office locations to communicate. This is a very expensive one-off cost.

In this example, the existence of the NBN would provide the ability to simply connect them to the fibre infrastructure, and setup a VPN. Office communications would be fast and database interactions would be seamless. Also the office phone system could be run over the NBN which would allow for a simple internal office phone system with no dropouts.

Example Two:

One of our customers recently experienced a power surge due to a lightning strike. The impact to this business was profound as the main server suffered considerable damaged, including the system board. The event also caused major corruption to the databases. Backup restoration was a complex and time consuming process. This business experienced multiple delays to the general business and disaster recovery is now a priority for this business.

We have configured offsite replication for their backups but this is currently running over two ADSL2 connections, so that backup replication is slow and can get interrupted due to poor line quality.

In this example, the existence of the NBN would provide the opportunity to partake in "Cloud" offsite backup services providing peace of mind and quick restoration in the event of a system failure. "Cloud" computing services also can provide offsite replicate servers, which would have allowed this business to be operational within hours instead of weeks. We also have the

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understanding that the NBN could provide electricity service companies the ability to utilise Smart Grid technology which may have prevented the power surge in the first place.

Implementation of the NBN and associated technology would eliminate the impact of these problems.

Example Three:

A group of like businesses are merging into a single entity, but continuing to operate from their existing places of business. They are planning for growth in their business and have strategies to expand the business beyond Broken Hill. This will provide increased job opportunities for Broken Hill people. The limiting factor is their business plans are the regional WAN capabilities. They have recently implemented a VPN WAN over ADSL2 but are finding that upload speeds are severely limited for the expense that they are already outlaying. We have been in discussions with them about a radio link option for their local sites, however one of their businesses is located on the south side of the “Line of Lode” which makes radio link to that site difficult and/or expensive. These businesses have also been affected by the lightning strikes and power anomalies. They have asked for a recommendation for a cost effective disaster recovery solution. The “Cloud” would be an obvious choice but it is not available here.

In this case the existence of the NBN would provide a simple and cost effective solution to their business expansion and data security problems

Example Four:

A local business wants to make it easy for their employees to connect back to their main office via VPN services, as their staff visits other regional towns and centres. VPN is effective, but the upload speed into their ADSL connection is slow and cannot handle multiple users.

The existence of the NBN would provide a cost effective solution to this for mobile small businesses.

Example Five:

A local non-profit sporting organisation would like to access video-conferencing to improve the skills of their members. Access to this is cost-prohibitive as is importing trainers. The NBN would provide low cost access to high speed video-conferencing for a starting organisation such as this.

Example Six:

A teacher at a local school explained to us that they are expected to use online learning, however network access here is not keeping pace with the cities because the developers expect a minimum Internet speed in order to use the online learning effectively. Regional teachers have limited access to offsite professional development courses, but have been offered online professional development. However the videoconferencing lag is such that it remains unfeasible.

The NBN would provide educational services on par with those in the cities which would reduce the gap that currently exists between city and regional schools. Teachers would be attracted to work in Broken Hill as they would be able to readily stay in contact with family & friends.

And then there is our own business:

The problems we have to contend with are;

- We regularly participate in training webinars to keep our staff skilled up. We often experience delays in those webinars, and cannot participate in proper video-conferencing over ADSL2.
- We have the skills, the floor space and the environment to be able to provide "Cloud" computing services to companies outside of Broken Hill that would like to store offsite servers in a tectonically stable environment. But we do not have the connection speed. It is not cost-effective to run Cloud services over ADSL.
- competition between ISP Providers is not fierce, and so we are limited to a few providers and their limited services.
- Slow connection speeds lead to wasted time, and decreased productivity. Drop-outs often result in costs to our customers
- Inability to grow beyond Broken Hill and the local regional towns

We also believe the NBN could attract large business to setup call centres and data centres in this inexpensive area, which could prevent the off-shoring of jobs, and the creation of jobs for local Australians. If Broken Hill can attract large business to the area, then its population and economic stability would not be so reliant on the fluctuations of the local mines' fortunes. This in turn would build upon itself. Understanding the technology as we do, we are excited and hopeful for Broken Hill's inclusion in the early stages of the roll out.

There is no doubt in our mind that the poor Internet services available in the region are severely inhibiting the growth of local businesses and stifling regional employment opportunities.

We urge that the Joint Committee prioritise Broken Hill in the rollout of the NBN.



Robin Edgecumbe
Managing Director
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