

WBT Inquiry  
Submission No. ....10.....

From: David Leonard [mailto:david.leonard@itee.uq.edu.au]  
Sent: Friday, April 19, 2002 4:09 PM  
To: cita.Reps@aph.gov.au  
Subject: Wireless Broadband Enquiry

Dear Sirs,

I understand that you have been considering the draft terms of reference of the recently announced enquiry into Wireless Broadband.

It concerns me that the draft terms of reference are slanted towards the "big end of town", and rural and regional areas. I implore you to extend the terms of reference to explicitly include community groups that are implementing their own, wireless broadband infrastructure in the cities and their hinterland.

As a fringe-suburban Brisbane resident living just 100m from where the cable providers cease to provide cable Internet access, I have become involved with a community wireless broadband group called Brisbane Mesh ([www.brismesh.org](http://www.brismesh.org)). This group organises relative strangers to connect their homes together using low-cost wireless data networking technology and the free, class-licensed, ISM band. We are but one of perhaps a dozen similar community groups nationwide, to date composed mostly of computer enthusiasts and amateur radio enthusiasts.

Our objective is to supply free, high-speed, data network services to our community, by implementing our own privately-owned, cooperative infrastructure. We can do this cheaply by using house-to-house communication consisting of commodity wireless technology (802.11b devices), salvaged or home-made antennae, and freely available software based on Internet standards.

I have found that our community of over 300 people is now in turmoil over some particularly nebulous areas of the Telecommunications Act. In particular, our community attempts to be exempt from costly carrier licences by having our network units "operate solely on a non-commercial basis", as described in the Act. However, nowhere in the legislation does it clearly describe what

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the criteria for non-commercial operation of these units are.

Specifically, we wish to route "commodity" Internet traffic over our community network, either in a free or in a 'non-profit' sense, yet remain classified as "non-commercial" for the purposes of the Act. It is not clear that if data carried by a commercial supplier is tainted in some way as to cause further carriage of the data to also be considered commercial.

As there have been no precedents set with regard to these questions, and the advice we have been able to obtain from various legal practitioners and the ACA have been unhelpful, our activities have remained stunted or questionable. Under the current legislation, we operate without certainty, while continually fearing that a large, corporate network service provider will see us as a threat to their customer base and launch legal proceedings against us that we are in no position to defend.

I hope that you will consider our concerns in the upcoming enquiry.

Yours faithfully,

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