



CHIEF MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT

Chief Executive

WBT INQUIRY Submission No. ...20.....
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The Secretary
House of Representatives Communications,
Information Technology & the Arts Committee
Suite R1, 116
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Secretary

I refer to the letter of 15 April 2002 from Mr Christopher Pyne MP, which was addressed to the Chief Minister, inviting a submission on the current and potential use of wireless technologies to provide broadband communication services in Australia, including regional Australia. The Chief Minister has asked that I respond on his behalf.

Broadband access is one of the key elements of the provision of combined voice, data and video services to the ACT community and region.

In the ACT, some broadband wireless technologies are currently being used to provide these types of services. For example:

- TransACT, the ACT's leading broadband access provider, uses 8 satellite dishes to source and aggregate content and is providing broadband wireless links to local Internet Service Providers and businesses.
- ActewAGL, the city's provider of electricity, water, gas and sewerage services, has been using microwave to network its offices and plants in the ACT.
- General Packet Radio Service (GPRS) is being used by our Road User Services to provide real-time access to vehicle registration and driver licence data via handheld mobile phones and Personal Digital assistants.

As well, the ACT Government recently expressed its support for the Broadband Infrastructure for the Rural Community, Health and Education (BIRCHE) project to establish a broadband microwave network to support health and education services in south eastern NSW.

Broadband wireless technology has proven a viable option for the provision of trunk services (ie. transmission of data between local exchanges). However, local access should be a major consideration in any changes to the telecommunications regulatory regime to ensure we get the best out of the technology. For example, our emergency services are currently using low frequency radio service for their operations, but it is conceivable that they may use broadband in the future.

With increasing demand on the radio frequency spectrum, careful coordination and planning of bandwidth allocation is needed in each jurisdiction particularly with a view to ensuring that spectrum remains available to providers of community services as future needs become clear.

Thank you again for the opportunity for the ACT Government to have input into your inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Robert Tonkin
Chief Executive

24 May 2002