



**CAUDIT**

**Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology**

24 February 2011

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

## **INQUIRY INTO THE ROLE AND POTENTIAL OF THE NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK**

### **Introduction**

The Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT) welcomes the opportunity to provide information to the inquiry regarding the role and potential of the National Broadband Network.

The Council of Australian University Directors of Information Technology (CAUDIT) is an incorporated entity with membership drawn from the Information Technology (IT) Directors/Chief Information Officers of higher education institutions in Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific and Papua New Guinea, as well as the Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Australian Institute of Marine Science.

CAUDIT's Mission is to enhance its members' ability as key strategic advisers on the use of information technology in higher education.

### **Background**

Communications technology and the Internet has played a key role in supporting higher education teaching, research, administration and community service in Australian universities since the early 1980's. University IT staff and computer science academics recognised the limitations of the then commercial products and this led to the creation by the sector of its own telecommunications carrier namely the [Australian Academic and Research Network \(AARNet\)](#) in 1990.

The reticence of commercial carriers to lease access to their fibre assets to enable universities and CSIRO to deploy affordable multi-gigabit links between local campuses, regionally and nationally led to a major review and report in November 2002 titled “The Higher Education Bandwidth Advisory Committee Report “A framework for an Australian research and education network”.

The then Education and Communications Ministers endorsed the report’s recommendations and the education Minister approved substantial funding for an Australian Research & Education Network (AREN) to be built on private and leased fibre from Cairns to Perth.

The AREN initiative focussed not only on long distance fibre to interconnect almost all Australian universities and major CSIRO sites but also established regional networks such as [VERNet](#) in Victoria and [SABRENet](#) in South Australia.

The Australian Government has continued to invest in extending the reach and capacity of the AREN including through the current \$37M [National Research Network](#) Project funded as part of the Super Science Program by the Education Investment Fund (EIF).

Thanks to the AREN, most universities have affordable 1Gbit/s, and some now have 10Gbit/s, connections. However University students and researchers are not always located on campus and the ubiquity promised by the NBN is fundamental to providing ready access for the entire Australian population to virtual education and research services.

CAUDIT therefore commends the Australian Government on its vision for the NBN.

### **Improving Educational Resources and Training**

The AREN has provided students with access to high bandwidth applications and multimedia content and virtual and personal learning environments (VLE’s & PLE’s) whilst they are physically on campus. By providing the anywhere, anytime, anyplace access that students need to maximise their use of these learning resources the NBN will in effect leverage the investment that has already been made in the AREN. This ubiquitous access is especially important for mature age students balancing work, study and their personal life.

Students in many disciplines undertake in-service training as part of their study such as field placement of health sciences students in regional hospitals and medical practices and teacher trainees in school classrooms. The NBN will enable these students to continue to access bandwidth intensive University educational resources whilst undertaking such placements.

Campus life should be transformational both inside and outside the classroom and laboratory. The NBN will provide in part the potential for external students to engage with their fellow students and academic staff on campus and heighten the learning experience.

**In conclusion**

To maximise their learning outcomes University students need affordable access to high speed broadband when off campus. The NBN can meet this need by delivering high speed, ubiquitous and affordable services to the entire Australian community.

Paul Sherlock

President CAUDIT Inc.

For further information on this submission please contact:

Mr Richard Northam

General Manager CAUDIT Inc.

Email