



KG.JCC T15/100

24 February 2011

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

**Subject: *Submission by Forbes Shire Council into the
National Broadband Network***

ABN 86 023 614 567

Administration Centre:
2 Court St Forbes NSW 2871

All mail to:
General Manager
PO Box 333
Forbes NSW 2871

General Enquiries:
T 02 68 502 300
F 02 68 502 399

**Mayor and
General Manager:**

T 02 68 502 304
F 02 68 502 399

Engineering Services:
T 02 68 502 333
F 02 68 502 398

Environmental Services:
T 02 68 502 344
F 02 68 502 398

Email & Web:
forbes@forbes.nsw.gov.au
www.forbes.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr McGowan

Further to your invitation Council would be pleased to make a submission on the capacity of the National Broadband Network to contribute a range of benefits to the community.

Forbes is situated in the heart of the Lachlan Valley, approximately 390km west of Sydney. Our Local Government Area covers 4717 sq/km and has a population of approximately 9400 people, of which approximately 1600 live outside the town boundaries. Forbes LGA is predominately a primary producing area with strong small business and light industrial sectors.

Currently Forbes' main telecom exchange is in the town centre, with many sub-exchanges throughout the LGA. Our exchange system was developed for voice delivery and has not been sufficiently upgraded for wide-spread data delivery. ADSL2 coverage is available within an approximate 8km radius of the main exchange and also to some of the outlying areas through the sub-exchanges. Not all of the sub-exchanges have been upgraded to carry data, resulting in delivery to residences/rural properties from the sub-exchanges that have been upgraded being slow or unreliable as most still have old copper wiring that over time has degraded or been damaged.

Because of limited ADSL2 access within the LGA wireless and satellite connections have become more common however this is not without its own set of problems, mainly higher cost for data when compared to ADSL2 and speed of delivery based on variability of signal strength and whether service is being provided via mobile lines. In essence our residents pay more for a slower service. The geographic characteristic of our region is 'slopes and plain' which invariable means there are wireless blackspots throughout the LGA that can only be serviced through dial-up or satellite.

Council agrees that any improvement to digital services, whether by the National Broadband Network or other means, will benefit the Forbes community through:

/2...

- the provision of faster and reliable download speed across all sectors, but in particular to the two small primary schools in Corinella and Bedgerabong localities, both over 30km from Forbes; small businesses (eg. eftpos facilities, marketing, on-line shopping) and primary producers (eg. accessing commodity prices, weather forecasts, research; on-line trading/purchasing);
- the potential it offers to improve and expand delivery of e-health services, Forbes has a limited range of services available within its local health network; the closest major medical hub is Orange (120km); and
- the possibility of creating economic growth by removing the barrier of 'slow internet' to business/industry groups considering relocation or start up in a rural area.

Council notes NBNC Co Ltd's current coverage footprint map indicates the Forbes LGA will predominately be serviced by satellite, then fixed wireless and finally optic fibre.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to your inquiry and Council would be pleased to expand on any aspect of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Carissa Bywater
GENERAL MANAGER