

*Taulea by  
Minister, 27/5/08*



## Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy

**MINISTER FOR BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**  
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE

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## Fifteenth Online and Communications Council Communiqué

Joint Communiqué

**Wednesday, 21 May 2008**

Australian, state and territory government ministers and the Australian Local Government Association met in Canberra for the 15th meeting of the Online and Communications Council. The meeting focused on the future development and use of broadband in Australia. The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, chaired the meeting. Members were represented by:

Australian Government	Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy (Chair) Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
New South Wales	The Hon Eric Roozendaal MLC Minister for Roads; Minister for Commerce
Victoria	The Hon Theo Theophanous MLC Minister for Industry and Trade, Information and Communication Technology, and Major Projects
Queensland	The Hon Robert Schwarten MP Minister for Public Works, Housing, and Information and Communications Technology
Western Australia	Ms Jaye Radisich MLA Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Energy; Resources; Industry and Enterprise
South Australia	The Hon Paul Caica MP Minister for Employment, Training and Further Education; Minister for Science and Information Economy; Minister for Youth; and Minister for Gambling
Tasmania	The Hon Michael Aird MLC Treasurer, Minister for Racing
Australian Capital Territory	Mr Jon Stanhope MLA Chief Minister, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Treasurer, Minister for Environment, Water and Climate Change, Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Northern Territory	The Hon Matthew Thomas Bonson MLA Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Corporate and Information Services, Minister for Senior Territorians, Minister for Young Territorians, Minister Assisting the Chief Minister on Multicultural Affairs representing the Northern Territory



Australian Local Government Association	Councillor Paul Braybrooks, Mayor of the Shire of Cootamundra
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An apology was received from the Hon Lindsay Tanner MP, Minister for Finance and Deregulation. Mr Tanner was represented by a senior official from the Department of Finance and Deregulation as an observer.

### Framework for collaborative development and use of broadband in Australia

Members agreed to develop a Framework for the collaborative development and use of broadband in Australia. For the first time, all governments in Australia have agreed to cooperate to develop a national broadband Framework to guide future programs and activities.

Members noted that it is timely that Australia adopts a clearly defined national Framework for broadband development and use, given the future roll-out of the National Broadband Network, and the investment by all levels of government in telecommunications initiatives. The Framework should promote an appropriate market structure taking into account the National Broadband Network outcomes and objectives.

Broadband is a key enabler for the digital economy. It is critical to the delivery of private and public sector services and applications in education, health, community and other key services. It also generates productivity and other economic efficiency gains across the economy as well as environmental benefits.

The Framework will help position Australia as a competitive and innovative knowledge-based economy, and will focus on practical and achievable strategies to further develop and facilitate the use of broadband.

Members noted that there are significant potential benefits by working collaboratively to ensure there are synergies and linkages in the activities undertaken by jurisdictions to develop broadband infrastructure and applications.

Members agreed that the Framework will be drafted by the National Broadband Development Group—a Working Group of the Online and Communications Council comprising representatives from the Australian, state, territory, local government, industry and community. All levels of government will be consulted in developing the Framework, as well as a number of key users of broadband, including the education and health sectors.

The draft Framework will be considered at the Council's next meeting.

### National Broadband Network

Members welcomed and supported the Australian Government's commitment of up to \$4.7 billion to implement the National Broadband Network, noting it is the largest commitment ever made by an Australian Government in developing broadband infrastructure. Members noted that the National Broadband Network provides a unique opportunity to establish high-speed broadband infrastructure, as well as the platform for the future development and use of broadband in Australia.

Members supported the Australian Government's request for submissions on remote broadband for those areas outside the coverage of the National Broadband Network, and encouraged all interested parties to contribute to this process. Submissions will be considered by the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee, which will deliver a comprehensive report to the Australian Government in August 2008 on ways to improve telecommunications in rural and remote areas of Australia.

The state and territory Ministers resolved to work together to examine options to leverage their future telecommunications procurements to ensure an appropriate competitive structure and to deliver enhanced value for money and expanded and better quality of



services.

The state and territory Ministers expressed their strong preference for a solution to be operated by a *genuine wholesale provider* that is separate from any retail service provider.

### **National Broadband Network—strategies for effective use and development**

Members agreed that a cooperative approach between all tiers of government is vital to the effective use and evolution of the National Broadband Network, once a successful tenderer is chosen. Members noted that the National Broadband Network has the potential to be a key enabler for all jurisdictions to transform and enhance access to government services and information, realise productivity benefits, and foster the development and use of new and innovative services and applications.

Members agreed on the importance of open access to backhaul and last mile infrastructure.

National Broadband Network proponents have been asked to demonstrate a *clear upgrade path* for the network to meet future consumer demand and service developments to at least 2020 and preferably beyond.

Members agreed to develop a cooperative and collaborative approach identifying priority areas for further work, as well as addressing impediments to the possible effective use and evolution of the National Broadband Network. In particular, members noted this could include action by individual governments to:

- augment the National Broadband Network by further developing the capability of the infrastructure or extending it through complementary network infrastructure
- provide digital content in priority areas, such as health and education, emergency services, cultural institutions and general government service delivery which can be delivered by the National Broadband Network
- transform the nature and delivery of key government applications and services in, for example, local government, education and health
- use the National Broadband Network to deliver certain Australian, state, territory and local government services to Indigenous Australians
- help streamline planning process for broadband deployment into greenfield sites and other developments.

Members agreed to work with other relevant Council of Australian Government Ministerial Councils in education, health and regional development as well as the key sectors on this issue.

Members welcomed the eHealth Forum being organised by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing. The Forum, which will be held in Melbourne on 18–19 July 2008, will identify linkages and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation to improve the delivery of health services via broadband. The Forum will also provide stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss recent eHealth developments, and share information on related key broadband initiatives.

### **Building on broadband**

Members welcomed the announcement of the new *Building on Broadband* initiative, and agreed to contribute towards a small number of strategically focused broadband projects. They will build on and add value to already successful collaborative Clever Networks projects and other funding initiatives delivered by the Australian, state, territory and local governments. Members agreed to identify projects which could be leveraged by the *Building on Broadband* initiative and contribute constructively to ensure practical and valuable outcomes are achieved.



## Review of the Online and Communications Council

Members agreed to a review of the Online and Communications Council in 2008. The review will examine the Council's future role, strategic direction and priorities, including the digital economy. Members noted that undertaking the review at this time is particularly opportune, given the new communications landscape which the National Broadband Network will create, and the proposed national Framework for collaboration on the further development and use of broadband in Australia.

The review will provide a systematic approach to reforming the Online and Communications Council. Key stakeholders, including state and territory and local governments, other Ministerial Councils, and key representatives of the telecommunications and ICT peak user and industry organisations would be consulted during of the review.

All members agreed to cooperate with the review.

The report and recommendations arising from the review will be considered at the Council's next meeting.

## Key resolutions

A list of key resolutions agreed to at the meeting is included as Attachment A.

## Next meeting

Members agreed that they would next meet in Melbourne in November 2008.

## Media contacts:

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## Attachment A

## Key resolutions agreed to at the meeting

### National broadband agenda

#### Members:

- supported the development of a draft framework for collaborative development and use of broadband in Australia
- agreed that the draft framework would be developed by the National Broadband Development Group in consultation with key stakeholders
- agreed to specific input from the states, territories and local government and other key stakeholders into the draft Framework
- noted that the draft framework will be considered at the Council's next meeting in Melbourne in November 2008.

### National Broadband Network

#### Members:

- welcomed the National Broadband Network initiative
- encouraged all interested parties to contribute to the Australian Government's

request for submissions on remote broadband for those areas outside the coverage of the National Broadband Network.

State and territory Ministers:

- resolved to work together to examine options to leverage their future telecommunications procurements to ensure an appropriate competitive structure and to deliver enhanced value for money and expanded and better quality of services
- expressed their strong preference for a solution to be operated by a genuine wholesale provider that is separate from any retail service provider.

### **National Broadband Network—strategies for effective use and development**

Members:

- agreed to a cooperative approach to the effective use and evolution of the National Broadband Network once the successful tenderer is chosen
- agreed on key priority areas for collaboration between all jurisdictions to maximise the effective use and evolution of the National Broadband Network
- welcomed the announcement of the new *Building on Broadband* initiative, and agreed to contribute towards a small number of strategically focused broadband projects.

### **Review of the Online and Communications Council**

Members:

- agreed that a review of the Online and Communications Council be undertaken in mid-2008
- agreed to the proposed Terms of Reference for the review
- agreed to cooperate and provide input to the review
- noted that the report and recommendations from the review will be considered at the Council's next meeting in Melbourne in November 2008.

### **Other business**

Members:

- agreed that the next meeting will be held in Melbourne in November 2008.

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