

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 3
Output Group: 3.1 – Research Infrastructure

DEST Question No. E694_04

Senator Carr provided in writing

Refers to DEST Question No. E443_04

Question:

- a) What is the progress in rectifying all the deficiencies and inadequacies in broadband access affecting Australian universities?
- b) Which of the problems identified in the report on broadband released late last year are yet to be dealt with?

Answer:

Broadband access affecting Australian universities

- a) The Australian Government has recently secured access to optic fibre for 15 years on the NextGen network to form the major part of the Australian Research and Education Network (AREN) under the management of AARNet Pty Ltd. This is in addition to the north Queensland bandwidth project currently underway which will provide a high bandwidth connection from Brisbane to Townsville via Rockhampton, and the contribution towards the establishment of a Tasmanian Research and Education Network with substantially improved bandwidth connection across Bass Strait to link with the AREN. These initiatives will ensure that the AREN will serve universities and the wider research community across the mainland and Tasmania leaving only the Northern Territory to have its connections upgraded.

It is expected that most Australian universities and their campuses will have high bandwidth connections to the AREN backbone by the end of 2005.

The Australian Government has also secured access to a high bandwidth connection to the United States for universities and the research community. This connection will enable access to other international broadband networks, thus significantly improving the collaborative opportunities for Australian researchers and educators.

- b) The Higher Education Bandwidth Advisory Committee (HEBAC) Report identified four priority areas:
 1. Northern Queensland connections back to Brisbane;
 2. Hobart to Melbourne connections;
 3. Northern NSW, specifically issues relating to Southern Cross University deficiencies; and
 4. a sustainable solution for Northern Territory broadband needs.

Priorities 1 and 2.

As outlined in (a), projects addressing the Northern Queensland and Tasmanian needs are underway.

Priority 3

Bandwidth for Southern Cross University will be resolved through connection to the NextGen fibre. A working group is costing options for this connection.

Priority 4

A sustainable solution for the provision of affordable high bandwidth is being sought. A stakeholder group continues to explore viable, sustainable options with telecommunications carriers.