

SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK

Questions on Notice

Further hearings into the National Broadband Network

Melbourne, 14 April 2010

Armidale Dumaresq Council (NSW)

Mr Stephen Gow, Director Planning and Environment Services (Teleconference)

Mr David Steller, Director, Engineering and Works (Teleconference)

Municipality of Kiama (NSW)

Mr Bryan Whittaker, Engineering Director (Teleconference)

Townsville Council (QLD)

Mr David Lynch, Executive Manager, Economic Development and Strategic Projects (Teleconference)

City of Onkaparinga (SA)

Mr Brian Hales, Group Manager Economic Development (Teleconference)

QoN No.	Hansard Page Reference	Senator	Question	Status
1	NBN 12	Fisher	<p>Senator FISHER—I will ask my questions of Mr Hales, who no doubt will be ecstatic about that, but could the rest of you also take it as if the questions were to you and provide the committee with answers to those questions on notice? As part of the rollout, has the City of Onkaparinga been required to sign any sort of confidentiality agreements with anybody—for example, with NBN Co. or any government departments?</p> <p><i>The City of Townsville has not been required to sign any confidentiality agreement, although material has been provided to Council on a commercial-in-confidence basis. As a part of its normal procedures and as and when required, Council will be treating information provided to it by NBN Co on a confidential basis.</i></p>	

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2	NBN 12	Fisher	<p>Senator FISHER—Thank you. That is my first question for the rest of you very good gentlemen. You will all have local planning laws and requirements. Mr Hales, at this stage has there been any discussion about or do you have any expectations that there might need to be some changes to or circumvention of what would normally be local planning rules to facilitate the rollout? If so, on what basis?</p> <p><i>There has been no discussion of changing or circumventing existing planning requirements. It is not expected that any changes or circumventing of local planning policy will be required.</i></p>	
3	NBN 14	Fisher	<p>Senator FISHER—My question is about timing. This is my third question that I would like everybody to answer on notice—but, Mr Hales, if you could answer today. When are you expecting the trial rollout to be operational for Willunga? And on what do you base that expectation?</p> <p><i>Based upon information provided by NBN Co, we are anticipating the roll-out in the Townsville first release site to be operational at the end of 2010/early 2011 based on brief provided by NBN Co</i></p>	
4	NBN 14	Fisher	<p>Senator FISHER—My supplementary question is: given the imminence of the rollout—August, the eighth month of this year—have you agreed a timeline to get to that implementation?</p> <p>Mr Hales—No, we have not.</p> <p>Senator FISHER—I ask the same question of everybody else, if you would not mind answering that on notice. Thank you.</p> <p><i>No discussion has been had in relation to this specifically, although Townsville City Council is currently engaged in discussion with NBN Co design consultants to plan for the roll-out.</i></p>	

QoN No.	Hansard Page Reference	Senator	Question	Status
5	NBN 14	Chair	<p>CHAIR—Gentlemen, thank you very much for your attendance. We were overly ambitious in thinking we could have a complete discussion on this. There will be quite a number of questions on notice, which we will try and make simple and do not expect long answers to. The committee secretariat will send you some of the questions that have been flagged, and some others, if you could oblige us with answers. I know you are all particularly busy at this time of year, but thank you very much for your attendance and for your participation.</p> <p>To the extent you did not cover this in your oral evidence:</p> <p>a. How did your Council first hear it had been selected as a mainland trial site?</p> <p><i>Townsville City Council first became aware of its selection as a mainland trial site through the media on the day of the official announcement of sites by NBN Co.</i></p> <p>b. Is new fibre being installed or is existing infrastructure being used? Was there existing infrastructure available? Is the roll-out via aerial or underground cabling?</p> <p><i>It is understood that new fibre will be utilised. Council is not aware of the level of existing fibre within the site.</i></p> <p>c. Is current regional backhaul sufficient to meet the network's needs?</p> <p><i>It is unclear whether current regional backhaul is sufficient to meet the networks needs. Such a determination would require a degree more information than Council currently has, but as a part of the development of the Townsville City Economic Development Strategy, an assessment of demand for telecommunications (including broadband) is envisaged to be undertaken. This is anticipated to be completed by late 2010. It would also seem intuitive that NBN Co would not have selected a first-release site without a consideration of current regional backhaul capacity. Some of the institutions and organisations (such as James Cook University, Australian Institute for Marine Science, Defence Forces, Hospital) within the city have a high demand for backhaul capacity and as such, it is expected this would have been factored in to the decision to have Townsville as an early release location.</i></p>	

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5 (cont)	NBN 14 (cont)	Chair	<p>d. To what extent is information about the NBN being communicated to residents / local businesses?</p> <p><i>NBN Co has engaged with Council to determine appropriate strategies for disseminating information to residents and local businesses. This will include a public information/open house to be conducted in the area. It is understood that NBN Co will conduct a public open day in May 2010. Council will assist in promoting this event.</i></p> <p>e. What do you see as the benefit of the network to your local government area and its residents? What additional services / opportunities do you hope the NBN will deliver in your area? What additional support do you require to realise those plans?</p> <p><i>There will be significant benefits for Townsville from the NBN. These are primarily related to connectivity and access and an ability to do things in a more efficient way. For most residents, benefits will probably accrue in areas related to lifestyle and quality of life, where they will be able to access products and services not currently available or in a more efficient way. Additionally, the ability to relate and connect to other people electronically locally, regionally, nationally and internationally will enhance lives and assist in overcoming perceptions of remoteness and isolation.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of impact on business, we believe there will be significant benefits to be realised. As a part of the development of the Townsville City Economic Development Strategy, Council will examine how a leading edge telecommunications platform will provide opportunities for business and industry development in the City.</i></p> <p><i>It also needs to be remembered that in many cases, applications that the NBN will support have not yet been developed and hence it is in some ways, “a brave new world”.</i></p> <p><i>It is believed that the Federal government, through the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, should be providing information to the community on the potential of the NBN and how people can utilise it to enhance their lives.</i></p>	

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5 (cont)	NBN 14(cont)	Chair	<p><i>Council does not have the resources, nor do we believe it is our role, to educate the community on the impact of the NBN and how it can be used to transform the way people live and do business. We are willing to participate in this process, but believe it needs to be led by the Federal government.</i></p> <p>f. Is there demand in your area among constituents for the NBN services? If so, for what services?</p> <p><i>This has not been assessed by Council, but it is believed that once a broad community education process is undertaken, there will be a heightened awareness and interest in NBN services. This may be impacted significantly by pricing considerations, which are yet to be determined and are not a matter for which has more than a curious interest.</i></p> <p>g. Will installation interrupt supply of ordinary local government services? Will the roll-out ultimately enhance the supply of ordinary local government services?</p> <p><i>At this stage there has been no indication that installation will interfere or interrupt local government services. NBN Co has sought to engage with Council to ensure installation is seamless and has minimal impact on Council and the community. The provision of the NBN network will provide Council with opportunities to enhance its services, as well as examine potential cost savings. This could be in the area of information provision to the community, remote sensing of council plant and equipment, and efficiencies and integration of service provision. These have yet to be fully investigated, but Council is familiar with the benefits of a fibre network, and has sought to link several of its facilities in the city to achieve greater levels of connectivity.</i></p> <p>h. To what extent are local planning policies affected by the NBN roll-out? What is being done by NBN Co / the Council / other bodies to address these matters?</p> <p><i>Local planning policies are not significantly impacted by NBN roll-out. NBN will be required to comply with Council planning and approvals processes. Given the scale of the project, there may be a significant impact on Council resources to deal with this, although direct costs incurred, including the time of planning and other officer, are recoverable.</i></p>	

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5 (cont)	NBN 14(cont)	Chair	<p><i>It is understood that the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) are developing policies and protocols to deal with the impact of the NBN roll-out. Townsville City Council is involved in this process, and as a first release site, is well placed to provide input into this process.</i></p>	