

Chapter 1

Context of the inquiry

1.1 The Select Committee on the National Broadband Network (the committee) was established by the Senate on 25 June 2008. The committee's Terms of Reference, as amended, are reproduced in appendix 1.

1.2 The committee has published four interim reports. A list of the recommendations the committee has made in each of its interim reports can be found at appendix 2.

1.3 The Fourth Interim Report was presented out of session on 18 May 2010. That report comprehensively assessed the progress on the National Broadband Network to that date. As originally drafted, that report was intended to be the final report of the committee.¹

1.4 However, on 12 May 2010, the Senate voted to extend the committee's reporting date to 17 June 2010. The extension was agreed to as a direct result of the government's decision to only publicly release the *Implementation Study for the National Broadband Network* (the Implementation Study)² less than one week before the committee was due to table its final report.

1.5 Paragraph 2A of the committee's terms of reference require the committee to:
examine the findings of the National Broadband Network Implementation Study, the Government's response to the Implementation Study and any subsequent implications of that report for the National Broadband Network policy.³

1.6 Although the government had received the Implementation Study on 5 March 2010,⁴ it refused to publicly release the document for more than two months. It finally

1 A fuller overview of the historical context of the inquiry is contained in the committee's interim reports: see Senate Select Committee on the National Broadband Network, *Third Report*, 26 November 2009 ('Third Report'), pp 1–4, www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/broadband_ctte/third_report/report.pdf; Senate Select Committee on the National Broadband Network, *Fourth Interim Report*, 18 May 2010 ('Fourth Report'), pp 1–3, http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/broadband_ctte/interim4-report/report.pdf.

2 McKinsey-KPMG, *Implementation Study for the National Broadband Network*, 5 March 2010.

3 Paragraph 2A was inserted by the Senate on 26 November, 2009, pursuant to Recommendation 12 of the committee's Third Report. The full Terms of Reference, as amended, is reproduced in appendix 1.

4 Mr Daryl Quinlivan, Deputy Secretary, Infrastructure, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 April 2010, p. 63.

made this important document public on 6 May 2010,⁵ on the eve of the committee's reporting date.

1.7 The sole focus of this report is the committee's further public hearings and consultation on the Implementation Study. As at the date of tabling, the government has not yet released its response to the Implementation Study.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.8 On 12 May 2010 the committee decided to conduct further hearings into the Implementation Study.

1.9 The committee advertised its decision to conduct further hearings, calling for submissions by 27 May 2010. The details of the committee's decision were placed on the committee's website and advertised in *The Australian*.

1.10 The committee received an additional 14 written submissions, taking the total number of submissions received by the committee during the life of its whole inquiry to 141. A list of all submissions received can be found at appendix 2.

1.11 The committee held two further public hearings in Sydney and Canberra. Details of those hearings, including a list of witnesses who gave evidence, can be found at appendix 3. When added to the number of previous hearings conducted by the committee, the committee has held a total of 18 public hearings.

1.12 Appendix 4 contains additional material received by the committee during its further hearings, including details of answers received to questions taken on notice.

Acknowledgements

1.13 The committee would like to express its appreciation for the cooperation of all organisations and individuals who made their time available to assist the inquiry, whether by personal appearance at a public hearing or by providing the committee with a written submission.

1.14 The committee is again indebted to Senate officers from the Committee Secretariat for their considerable assistance and advice in conducting all of the work of this select committee and in the preparation of the various reports the committee has published since the inquiry began.

1.15 In particular, we are indebted to Dr Ian Holland, the Secretary responsible for this report, and to Ms Fiona Roughley, who has provided the committee with invaluable assistance and advice in drafting this and the previous report, and in

5 The Hon. Lindsay Tanner, Minister for Finance and Deregulation and Senator the Hon. Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, 'Landmark study confirms NBN vision is achievable and affordable', Joint media release, 6 May 2010, www.minister.dbcde.gov.au/media/media_releases/2010/040 (accessed 6 May 2010).

understanding some of the complexities involved in an issue which is not easily comprehended. These two officers and their support staff continue the high standard of professionalism, balance and ability for which the Senate Committee Secretariat is rightly renowned.

1.16 The committee would also like to extend its thanks to staff of the Parliamentary Library, and other officers within the committee office, who generously assisted the secretariat. Particular thanks are extended to Ms Alison Kelly and Mr Stephen Palethorpe, former Secretaries to the committee, and Mr Hamish Hansford.

1.17 As the current, and last, Chair of the committee, I want to also pay tribute to my colleague Senator Mary Jo Fisher who so ably chaired the committee during the work of the committee leading up to its first three reports. Mary Jo's unique style, and her understanding of a very complex area of policy, have ensured that the committee, whilst not always agreeing on various points, did work amiably and cooperatively together in providing to the Parliament of Australia with what I believe is very useful work relating to Australia's broadband network.

Note on references

1.18 References to the *Committee Hansard* are to the proof *Hansard*. Page numbers may vary between the proof and the official *Hansard*.

