

ALEXANDRINA COUNCIL



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27 January 2014

**The Committee Secretary
Select Committee on the National Broadband Network
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600**

Dear Sir

Re: Report on the Government's reviews of the National Broadband Network (NBN) and the governance of NBN Co.

The Alexandrina Council sees the National Broadband Network as crucial in meeting the needs of our rapidly developing and expanding regional community. Council has keenly supported this project since its inception and has long been an advocate for improved broadband services in our region.

Alexandrina is one of the most progressive councils in South Australia. Strathalbyn to the north of the region is a delightful town, located only an hour from Adelaide. It attracts many new families who enjoy the many attractions of the countryside. Goolwa on the south coast links with Victor Harbor to the west to provide a stretch of coastline second to none. This is a tourist region as well as a growing destination for those seeking lifestyle changes. The region is also experiencing a large influx of semi retirees and permanent retirees. The land in between is prime broad acre agricultural land, incorporating cereal and livestock production, dairying, vineyards, and a large number of small rural home based industries and hobby farms.

The South Australian government's *30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide* has identified several growth areas in our region. We expect to see our population nearly double over the coming years. This will see a greater influx of retirees and other age cohorts bringing new pressures to bear and an influx of population to provide services in the growing region. The *30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide* projects an additional 22,000 people living in an additional 14,500 homes in our region by the year 2038. High speed broadband is therefore a key element that will help drive the economic development and service provision for our region.

We have been working closely with our neighbouring Councils to engage with NBN Co to ensure the successful deployment of high speed broadband throughout our community and share an understanding that this includes a mix of technologies to reach our most isolated people. We are currently working with our neighbouring Councils on technology projects that rely on high speed broadband to bring significant operational benefits to the Councils and improved service delivery to our community and region. These projects include shared ICT services and a Video Conferencing deployment as part of the Federal Digital Local Government Program.

We recognise that the Fibre To The Premises (FTTP) solution is the best option for the majority of our communities given the deteriorating condition of our copper network and the average longer "last mile" connections that cause so many issues for the current ADSL services. Prior to the recent Federal Election, NBN Co was progressing with a priority fibre roll-out within our main townships of Strathalbyn, Port Elliot, Middleton and Goolwa. While we accept that the NBN review proposes changes to the fibre roll out that will have an impact on the quality and equity of the original project, we are more concerned with maintaining our place in the priority of the deployment and not losing the momentum of the most significant infrastructure deployment in our region for decades.

Our main concerns are that two of our areas that had been identified as under construction by NBN Co have now fallen off of the map. Goolwa and Victor Harbor are contiguous localities and we are concerned about any apparent piece meal approach to the roll-out. We also believed that plans and work for Strathalbyn were well advanced, but they too seem to have been lost.

The recent change of Federal Government has delayed the project bringing uncertainty to our community and restricting our ability to implement programs based on access to high speed broadband. We are aware that the government intends to introduce a wider range of technologies; however our greatest concern is the delay to programs that we believed were well advanced.

As mentioned earlier, we are well advanced in working with other councils and Regional Development Australia, in the integration of IT services between councils, the provision of new services for tourism and small businesses, as well as enhancing the role that improved broadband can play in meeting the needs of our ageing community.

We would like to see the resumption of this project as soon as possible along with communication with Council prior to decisions being made on changes to priorities.

Yours sincerely



Colin Shackleford
Strategic Manager Information Services

CC:
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