Submission to the Senate Select Committee on the National Broadband Network

www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au

Intelligent, innovating communities are only achievable with world-best practice broadband networks

Industry experts recognise that a fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) network is a much better solution for national broadband[1]. Industries and government service delivery for the future will come from cities and places that have world's best broadband standards and only an FTTP network can truly future-proof our communities.

The argument on the merits of cheaper fibre-to-the-node (FTTN) option over FTTP is misleading as investment in long term capacity for innovation will deliver benefits that warrant higher costs. Long-term economic and social opportunities will be lost without a network capable of real innovation. Township amenity, small business and community services in Yarra Ranges will be strengthened by FTTP. We strongly encourage the Federal Government to maintain FTTP rollout.

Broadband innovation is a key driver for local economic and community development in Yarra Ranges

We recognise the potential of high speed broadband connectivity to drive economic and social development.

Mooroolbark, Chirnside Park, Lilydale, Coldstream, Yarra Glen and Healesville were included in the Round 5 NBN rollout area. Under previous NBN rollout plans, this deployment of broadband was to commence in December 2013.

Further delay and uncertainty on the Round 5 NBN rollout is an impediment to business growth and community amenity within Yarra Ranges

[1] .At a Committee for Economic Development of Australia conference in November 2013, cited that a fibre-to the premises NBN should be retained – source AAP Newswire.

Our municipality was also considered for Round 6 NBN rollout. The Upper Yarra corridor: Launching Place, Millgrove, Seville East, Warburton, Wesburn, Woori Yallock and Yarra Junction, are due to receive broadband network investments by 30 June 2016.

A high-speed broadband network supports flexible work practices. This is critical for our residents, many who have little or no access to public transport services. Tele-working offers benefits of reduced travel, less stress on roads and the environment and more time for residents to spend in their communities. Not having access to broadband has been cited by investors and potential residents to overlook Yarra Ranges in favour for regions that do have access.

With best-available broadband, tourism and small business in more isolated areas of the municipality can more confidently invest in eCommerce and broadband services. Local hospitality and conference facilities struggle to compete without broadband.

Emergency service management, accessing health, community and government services and education are all impacted by no access to broadband.

Uncertainty around previously committed broadband deployment will impede the economic and social wellbeing of our communities.

All levels of Government have a key role in emergency management and community safety. Inadequate internet network capacity is an unnecessary and unacceptable risk to community safety. Many of our most bushfire prone areas also have numerous mobile network black spots.

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Limitations of high-speed internet access in Yarra Ranges is already impeding our communities

The Yarra Ranges Opportunity Assessment for Economic and Community Growth through the Broadband Economy has built an evidence base to support the identification of strategic projects and current service gaps. See:
http://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Business/National_Broadband_Network

Research found that local ADSL coverage is highly inadequate for businesses and residents.

As of July 2013 senior service executives from Telstra confirmed that new ADSL connections at the Yarra Junction Exchange are blocked due to congestion.

No new ADSL services can be assigned to corporate or residential users in Yarra Junction.

The problem of system capacity is yet to be rectified and is challenging the effectiveness of business and government services in these disadvantaged but potential rich communities.

Our communities should not be disadvantaged by inadequate communications infrastructure. Solutions to service gaps should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Healesville, a town of approximately 7,000 residents with a vibrant local economy and community and a number of knowledge worker professionals, has seen broadband access progressively eroded. Council engagement with businesses with significant ICT needs in Healesville has confirmed this decline

IGL, a software house based in Healesville has experienced internet speeds decline from 24 Mbps to as low as 2 Mbps. As IGL director Adam Menary states:

"When the speed drops to the 2 Mbps during peak use times we can't use Voip phones, can't download large files quickly and can't effectively run our business from Healesville. Wireless doesn't allow sufficient download either. Rather than advertising for a programmer locally I have chosen to get someone to work out of a Melbourne office instead."

The quality and integrity of using existing infrastructure in a multi-technology mix NBN will be challenging in our municipality. Topography often means residents in populated areas like the Dandenongs do not have a line-of-sight back to the Fixed Wireless base stations.

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Heavy foliage and significant forested landscapes also restricts access for many residents to digital satellite (e.g. Foxtel). Monbulk and Emerald are two towns where Fixed Wireless or Satellite broadband under a multi-technology model will be inadequate.

For our businesses to be globally competitive and enjoy economic prosperity, rectifying this lack of broadband is essential.

Establishing high-speed broadband will unlock substantial demand and innovation

Access Economics identified Yarra Ranges Council as having metropolitan Victoria's third highest level of unmet business demand for first wave broadband (ADSL).

As the figure below shows, there is also substantial demand in the municipality for superior technologies like NBN type services.[2]
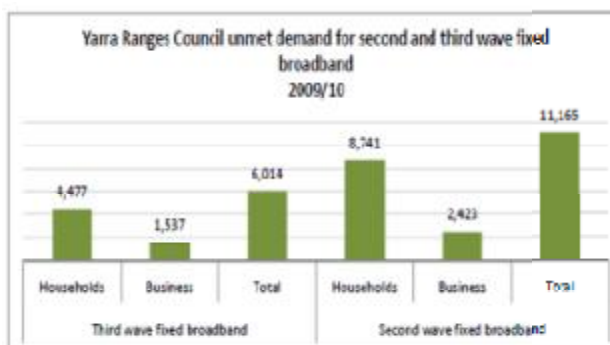

Figure 3: Unmet demand for second and third wave fixed broadband 2009/10

Council is a significant user of internet services. Our organisation would convert 50 of its sites currently connecting to its network via a mix of ADSL/ADSL2+/BDSL to the NBN as soon as it is available.

[2] Telecommunications Spend and Demand in Victoria, June 2010, report by Access Economics Pty Ltd for the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation

Innovative projects around health and community service delivery, customer relationship management and facilities management are being hampered by the dated networks across our dispersed locations.

The revised national broadband rollout needs collaborative engagement with local government and communities

For a FTTN solution to be effectively deployed, NBN Co needs to prioritise engagement with local government and our communities to better understand demand. The FTTN deployment model will impact timeframes for availability of services, the speed of services, as well as the visual amenity of our streetscapes. These are substantial changes.

Clarity on the expected deployment for previous Round 5 and Round 6 NBN rollout phases is needed.

This submission is seeking immediate recommencement of Round 5 deployment commitments and urges the maintaining of the fibre-to-the premises rollout for the suburbs and townships of Yarra Ranges.

Our topography, outdated ICT infrastructure, isolated communities, demand for better service access and diversity of industries and communities offer the rationale for conducting robust FTTN trials across our municipality.