

To: **National Broadband Network Parliamentary Committee**

March 31, 2017

Please find attached a copy of the Preliminary Report of our Industry and financed & lead NBN Audit for the NSW Central Coast.

The Audit was conducted **in response to a growing frustration in our community** as to the status and solutions of the rollout of the NBN in this region. The region offers a special insight into the NBN rollout in that it has a mix of the original NBN architecture and the re-purposed architecture types.

The Audit was undertaken with an **intention to creating learnings for the NBNC and Telecommunications providers**. We are currently finalising the Audit report by verifying some of the data and doing a greater investigation into speeds and reliabilities of a geographic representative group.

This preliminary report stirred a **great deal of media interest** locally and nationally and is as far as we can see the only local industry lead audit process that has occurred to date(?). The ABC 7.30 report in November did a story on the issues that were uncovered in the audit process.

We have been in **discussions with the NBN Co** about the issues that arose from the preliminary work. We put a series of constructive suggestions to their representatives over several months, though as of today we can not as yet report any concrete outcomes.

We have also asked local members of parliament to assist in the audit process, by making supplying de-identified data. Their contributions will be included in the final report.

Our final audit report is **drafting a series of recommendations** aimed at improving the rollout and local communications. These include but are not restricted to:

1. The establishment of a locally based third party local agent facility to take complaints from the public, verify these and send them to the NBN Co and Telcos with advice on action.
2. A local authorised agent to coordinate upgrades to superior infrastructure on behalf of business groups, joint property owners and communities.

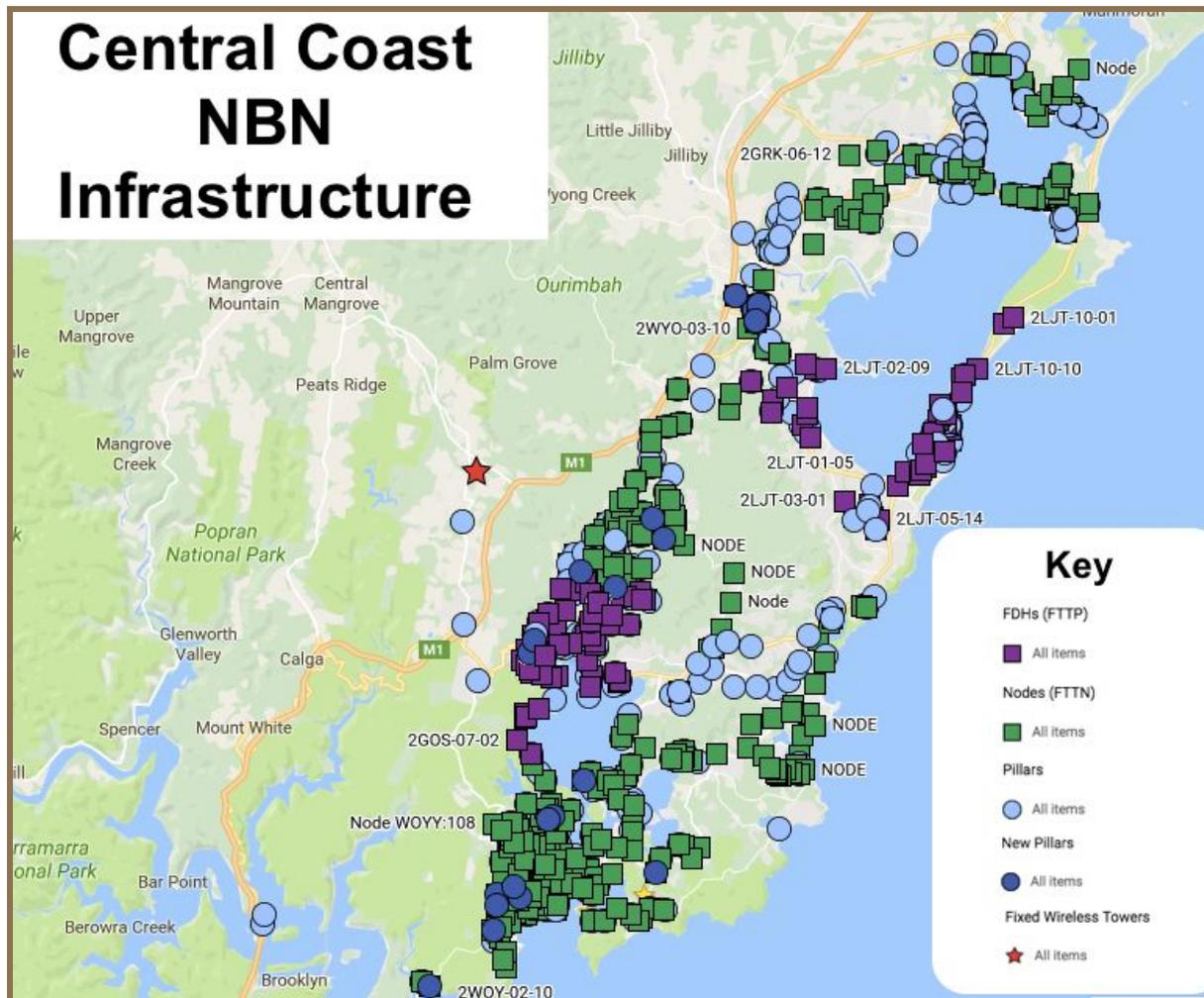
**Political Declarations** - I myself am a member of the ALP, additionally one of the audit committee members is member of the Liberal Party. It is fair to say that the broader Coastal Connexions group is a business leaning organisation, though members are not asked to state their political preferences. The audit was born of genuine frustration and observation.

**David Abrahams**, Lead Author for and on behalf of the Coastal Connexions CC NBN Audit committee. (More details in report)

Preliminary report

# Central Coast NBN Rollout Audit

Identifying Issues - Replicating Successes - Nov 2016



## Introduction

The Central Coast NBN Audit 2016 initiative was undertaken by Coastal Connexions, the Central Coast's digital industry grouping. Co-Conveners of Coastal Connexions are Tim Willcox and Edgar Adams.

Audit coordinating author - David Abrahams with working group - Louise Lewis, Jon Dawkins, Tim Willcox, Edgar Adams and the members of the greater Coastal Connexions group.

The audit survey was conducted over four weeks in September / October 2016 after a September design workshop with the Coastal Connexions group at Erina in early September.

## About the Audit

An 'audit' was called for during the 2016 federal election campaign as a way of getting to the bottom of NBN rollout frustrations that many members of the community, in business, residential premises and at schools had been experiencing over the last years in relation to the NBN rollout. The perception was that the alternative 'Fibre to the Node' infrastructure build was experiencing widespread problems. Though this was not entirely clear as no verified data was being presented.

The audit call was widely supported by local media and the community in general, though fell on deaf ears, despite weekly stories in the media about internet and phone drop outs and poor speeds. The audit contained 6 common questions, 15 Questions for NBN connected respondents and 10 for non NBN connected respondents. Questions are listed in the report under the heading 'The Survey Questions'.

This preliminary draft audit report outlines the major themes of the survey data. It is anticipated the final audit report will be published in early 2017 after more data verification and collection together with recommendations.

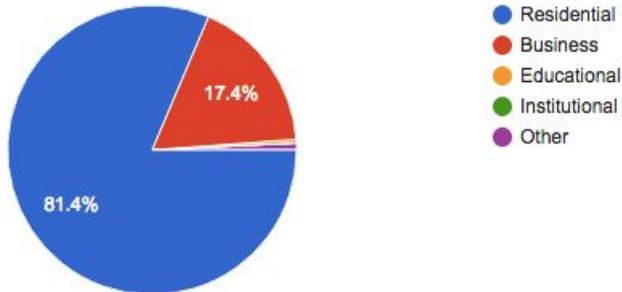
## Executive Summary

- A. 255 detailed submissions were collected across the region (257 minus two duplicates).
- B. 81% of respondents were residential, 17% were business, 2% institutions.
- C. 76% of respondents had an active NBN connection 24% did not have a connection for a variety of reasons.
- D. 63% of NBN connected respondents had Fibre to the Node connections, 26% had Fibre to the Premise connections with the remainder using wireless, satellite or unsure.
- E. 22% of connections subscribed to 100/40 Mbps speeds, 28% on 25/5-10 Mbps, 10% on 12/1 Mbps the remainder on other plans or unsure.
- F. 44% of respondents rated reliability as excellent or very high, while 32% said reliability was either poor or very poor.
- G. 26% of respondents were very unhappy with their NBN experience while 24% were very happy.

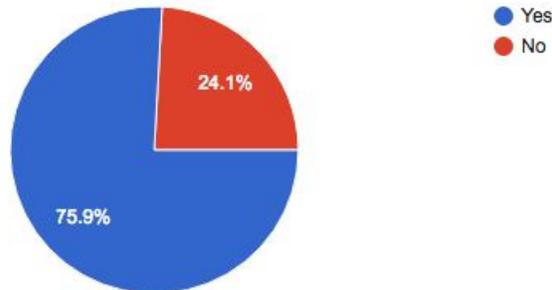
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## Tables in brief

A1. What sort of customer are you responding as (257 responses)



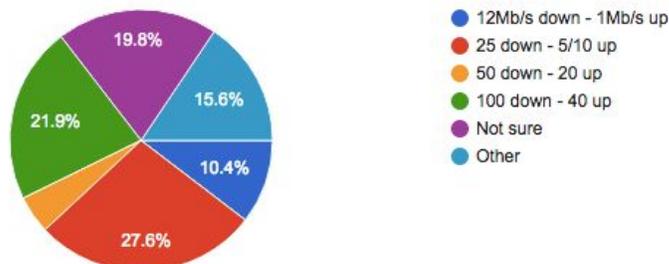
A7. Are you currently connected to the NBN? (257 responses)



Compiled by Organise Internet for Coastal Connexions

Central Coast NBN Audit Survey 2016

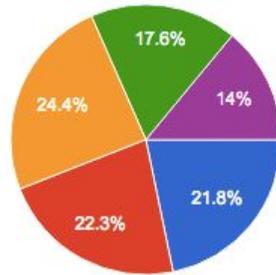
A11. What speed are you subscribed to? (192 responses)



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Central Coast NBN Audit Survey Oct 2016

**A12. How would you rate the reliability of your connection?** (193 responses)

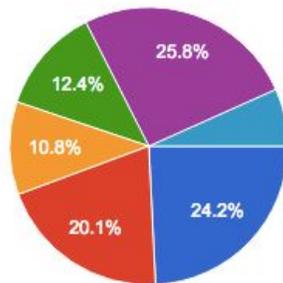


- Excellent (no drop outs and/or major speed disruptions)
- Very good (very occasional drop outs and/or speed disruptions)
- Good (occasional dropouts and/or speed limitations)
- Poor (regular dropouts and/or speed limitations)
- Very poor (constant dropouts and/or speed limitations)

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Central Coast NBN Audit Survey Oct 2016

**A15. Overall how would you rate your NBN experience?** (194 responses)



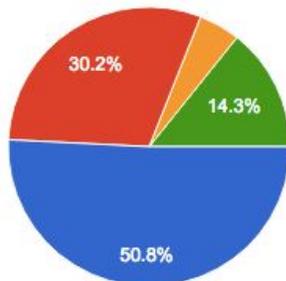
- Very happy
- Reasonably happy
- Neutral
- Slightly unhappy
- Very unhappy
- Other

Compiled by Organise Internet for Coastal Connexions

Central Coast NBN Audit Survey Oct 2016

**B1. Have you had any issues attempting to obtain a connection? If so please detail.**

(63 responses)



- My area has not been made available as yet
- I have ordered a connection, though it has not eventuated as yet
- I have cancelled my order, awaiting a satisfactory response.
- I have not ordered a connection

Compiled by Organise Internet for Coastal Connexions

Central Coast NBN Audit Survey 2016

## **Selected Responses**

The following written responses have been chosen to illustrate various perspectives. Names and identities removed, otherwise the text has not been altered.

### **Responses on connecting to the NBN ...**

*"My entire suburb is connected except our street and can not get any half decent response from nbn. They blame it on the contractors and know absolutely nothing. Our street has been completely forgotten about and our suburb was connected November 2015"*

*"Somersby Industrial Estate is very lacking in internet availability - no ADSL2 or NBN"*

*"Easy, box was already in when we moved in, and hardware was waiting for us"*

*"Reasonable, but expensive to pay for the set up costs in the home. We could afford it, but many wouldn't."*

*"Very biased, but very easy to connect in 5 working groups days."*

*"Yes but unable to connect your phone number"*

*"Absolutely terrible. NBNco misclassified our address and it took 6 months of constant interaction to have it reclassified. All of our neighbours had connections except us."*

*"I applied back in June and to start with they could not find our address and it just goes on and on. The latest update is they are having issues with the network and the remediation date is now the 12th November. We are in a retirement village and our neighbours are connected."*

*"The really frustrating issue was that the NBN probably did not need to turn up as on 4 March a man who works for a company that contracts to NBN and does their work in Gosford region was in our building on another matter. We asked him to step in and look*

*at the hardware we had set in our office. His advice was that everything is in place from an NBN perspective and all that is required (which is what we thought) was for Telstra to organise the transfer of the service to our new premises. He advised this DOES NOT REQUIRE an NBN technician. We had all the necessary cables and hardware and simply require Telstra to switch us over. We were further told by one person we spoke to at Telstra that if NBN updated its website with this serial number - NTD ALCLF then Telstra could turn up.*

*Either way, it took days of time, nearly caused my office manager a nervous break-down and occurred just as we switched all our customers over to the new website system."*

### **Responses once connected to the NBN**

*"Excellent"*

*"Connected for 2 years without issue, then in December 2015 started to have continual dropouts. Contacted Telstra and have had 4 modems, 3 NBN boxes and battery backup disconnected in an attempt to resolve. Lodged complaint with Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and this is yet to be finalised. This has now been going for 10 months and is NOT resolved. Happy to talk more about this but don't think there will be enough space here for me to properly record details."*

*"Internet connection was good, (next day), but because of an administration error we are still waiting for our original number to be "cata-ported". VoiP was provided after a few days with a temporary number, but "call forwarding" did not happen. TELSTRA is still charging line rental for a service that is not provided, (will enquire about this)."*

*"I would need more space than you have here to document the 4 months of frustration and stress we have had with NBN connection with Telstra. We stayed with Telstra so that we retained our email and landline number. We were cut off from both and battled Telstra for many weeks to be reconnected. After 4 Telstra technicians, 2 NBN technicians and 2 Modems we have been advised that the problem is the old copper wiring between the Node and our house that is causing the disruption. Telstra offered a speed boost to 50Mbps as compensation however the best we get is between 9.6 and 12Mbps. We have literally hundreds of drop outs every day, some days no service at all."*

*"Very poor, next to no communication from iiNet when it was to be connected. No communication that landline was going to be disconnected. No phone line for at least a week. Have had to change landline ph no. Due to connection problems. Problems with iiNet for weeks after connection who blamed the NBN who in turn blamed iiNet. Have had problems with billing being over charged no one accepting responsibility for their poor overall performance, Buck passing."*

*"It only took a few days for the connection but I have up to 30 dropouts during week days between the hours of 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. No problems before around 8:30am or after 5:30pm. No dropout during the evening. Less on wet weekend days. I feel that it coincides with the times the NBN would be working on rollouts in the surrounding suburbs. I am often unable to make a phone call during the daytime as the phone drops out several times. I monitor the internet with an ethernet connected modem and a tablet tuned to the radio so that I can be alerted to the exact time of dropouts. My speed is fine when it is working. iinet have been excellent in helping isolate any faults at either my end or thiers. NBN keep sending it back and getting me to retry steps I have already taken. (New modems, new cables, different phone sockets, different modem settings)"*

## **Historical Overview of Telecommunications Issues on Central Coast of NSW.**

The Central Coast region has historically had poor and/or patchy telecommunications services. A 1999 Telecommunications Strategy commissioned by the Federal Government identified high prices, poor service, variable internet availability, difficult radio and TV reception issues. The report was published by the Central Coast Economic Development Board and launched by Minister for Communications Richard Alston with local MPs Lloyd & Lee.

Telecommunications issues plagued the region for many years despite significant investments by telecommunications companies Telstra, Optus, SPT, Cirrus and others. In April 2009 the Federal Government Announced their intention to build a national broadband network built with a 90% 'full fibre optic cable to premises' across the nation and the NBN Company was created. A series of small trial sites was announced later that year. Despite best efforts the Central Coast was not selected.

However, local business and community leaders rallied in 2010 to create a business case to convince the Federal Government and NBNCo to make the Central Coast a priority rollout area for the NBN proper. Forums were held, money raised and motions of support were gained from both local councils.

in October 2011 the Central Coast of NSW was selected as a major NBN rollout region by the Federal Government, when the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that Gosford & Wyong LGAs would be among the first Fibre to the Premise to rollout zones. The NBN investment announcement followed a long regional lobbying effort by industry, education, community, business groups, Wyong and Gosford Councils with assistance of sitting local Members of Federal Parliament. A comprehensive business case was delivered to the Departments of Communications and Regional Development in June 2011.

Regional Development Australia Central Coast supported the formation of the CCBIG - Central Coast Broadband Infrastructure Group made up of local industry leaders, councils and MPs to facilitate planning and issues with the NBNCo. Design

for the Central Coast NBN rollout commenced in early 2012 with a series of local business and community forums held by NBNCo, coordinated by the newly formed Central Coast Broadband Infrastructure Group.

Construction of the fibre network commenced in June 2012. In December 2012 the first official fibre optic cable pull occurred in December 2012 at Showground Road to much fanfare. Initial fibre optic rollout maps centred around the two exchanges of Gosford and Long Jetty, later changed to Berkeley Vale. The first Central Coast fibre optic cable commercial offering was switched live on April 23, 2013 by Minister Conroy and Robertson MP O'Neill.

Early adopting customers connected to the network in June 2013. NBN Co published rollout maps covering 80% of the region's premises with Fibre to the Premise infrastructure. Contracts were signed with installation companies and work progressed at an increasing pace as the install teams established a reliable local workforce.

In the September 2013 election the incoming government pledged to change the infrastructure from full Fibre to the Premise to majority Fibre to the Node, promising to speed up the rollout at a cheaper price tag. A 300 strong business and community petition calling on the incoming government to honour the existing NBNCo fibre optic rollout maps and contracts was sent to the new local members and Communications Minister Turnbull. The petition fell on deaf ears. Existing installation contracts were cancelled or altered in favor of the proposed node infrastructure.

The Woy Woy peninsula was chosen as a national trial site for the Fibre to the Node infrastructure and switched on by the Prime Minister and Local MP Wicks in mid 2015. A series of issues with the rollout started to be published through local and social media as the NBN rollout progressed across the region. Issues were difficult to get a handle on in the maelstrom of marketing and media. This was the motivation for an audit survey.

The audit's catch cry was "Identifying issues & replicating successes".

Coastal Connexions are great supporters of the NBN as vital infrastructure for the region and the nation. We argue it is in everyone's interests to get a handle on the realities of the rollout, so as to build a better NBN for every customer.

For outer metropolitan, regional and rural Australia the NBN infrastructure is disproportionately vital for conducting social, business and family affairs compared to metropolitan areas that traditionally have a multitude of broadband issues.

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## **The Survey Questions**

The list of survey questions are listed below. They were designed to strike a balance between the need for standard data sets like speed, connection dates etc and the desire to collect more comprehensive stories from people about their experiences as perceptions.

A1. What sort of customer are you responding as

A2. Business or organisation's name

A3. Your suburb & postcode

A4. Your street

A5. Your contact email address

A6. Your Name

### Questions for respondents with NBN Connections

A7. Are you currently connected to the NBN?

A8. Who is your provider (Retail service provider) / ISP

A9. When were you connected to the NBN?

A10. What type of NBN connection do you have?

A11. What speed are you subscribed to?

A12. How would you rate the reliability of your connection?

A13. What was your experience around the process of getting connected to the NBN?

A14. Would you be interested in conducting a Speed Test?

A15. Overall how would you rate your NBN experience?

#### Questions for respondents without NBN Connections

B1. Have you had any issues attempting to obtain a connection? If so please detail.

B2. Have you any issues you would like to share

B3. Would you be interested in conducting a Speed Test?

B4. Would you be interested in being interviewed?

#### **Further work to be carried out**

The NBN Audit survey has produced more qualitative submission data than expected and so it was decided to produce this preliminary report to inform the public, partners and those in a position of power to educate themselves on the high level issues.

The plans forward are to both supplement the survey data with data from other sources and to conduct a series of controlled tests to help verify some of the data sets.

- A. Follow up all local Members of Parliament requesting they send through any de-identified person data that they have gathered in the course of their public duties. (Only some has been received at this time).
- B. Conduct on-site speed tests using a standardised methodology.
- C. Conduct a series of interviews with respondents with a view to producing illustrative case studies.

- D. Cross reference and map complex issues so as to identify location specific issues.
- E. Open up the online survey portal to allow for continued submissions to be received and garnish further intelligence.
- F. Meet with the NBN Co and Political leaders to discuss the data sets, seek inputs and solutions.
- G. Negotiate a follow up & suggest issues to address.

### **Coastal Connexions - Central Coast Digital Industries Group**

Co-conveners - Tim Willcox & Edgar Adams

Co-ordinating author - David Abrahams

With thanks to the greater Coastal Connexions Group for survey design and questions.

Specific thanks to working group; Louise Lewis, John Dawkins, Tim Willcox, Edgar Adams.

Questions and commentary

Survey portal is open at [www.organise.net.au/nbnauditcc](http://www.organise.net.au/nbnauditcc)