

**Palmer, Tamara (REPS)**

From: Paul Berkman
Sent: Friday, 18 February 2011 1:10 PM
To: Committee, IC (REPS)
Subject: The role and potential of the NBN

Hi,

My name is Paul Berkman. To give you an idea of my circumstances, my wife and I have a 2-year-old and another baby on the way and I am currently a PhD Candidate at the University of Queensland working on [sequencing the wheat genome](#). I am conducting my analysis using high powered computational methods, meaning that I have a moderate to high degree of engagement and competency with IT issues. In addition to my research, I am also engaged in the [Commercialisation Training Scheme](#) through which I am studying a Graduate Certificate in Research Commercialisation. My CTS study is focussed on Entrepreneurship, IP, and Sustainability, so possibilities for innovation and social entrepreneurship often occupy my thoughts of late. I hope this gives some context to my subsequent thoughts.

While I study in Brisbane I live about 150km away in Toowoomba which requires me to work from home half of the week and commute the other half. Living expenses in Toowoomba are much more affordable for our family even with the extra travel. To work from home I connect to the University remotely to access my computer and our large servers, however some issues remain with this arrangement. We have ADSL2 connected to our home address with Optus having chosen the fastest broadband available to us, yet quite regularly connectivity to the Uni is slow or connection is lost which limits my efficiency in working from home. I see one prime result for our family of the NBN will be an improvement in my connection speed to Brisbane consequently allowing our family to stay at home together more regularly while increasing my effectiveness in working from home.

My local church is heavily involved with Doomadgee, an indigenous community in remote far-north Queensland. This community was created as a mission station around 100 years ago and the departure of missionaries saw the substantial removal of purpose for the community, in both economic and social terms. There is now no "industry" *per se* that drives the economy of Doomadgee in the wake of missionary departure. This has precipitated a number of social difficulties for the community, the foremost of which relate employment and education. With the implementation of the NBN, communities such as Doomadgee that find themselves disengaged from the rest of Australia by distance and economic purpose can be re-connected to the rest of the country by addressing both of these issues. Media and news agencies are certainly moving voraciously towards digital fora and social networking sites continue to rise in usage, both of which have the potential to engage remote communities about issues on local, national and international scales. I would also propose that the NBN provides an opportunity for remote communities without a clear economic function to be engaged to seek whether the NBN might underpin economic development within such communities. For example, schools in these areas could perhaps take a strong IT focus, training youths in programming languages and the like, while also look to inspire entrepreneurial endeavours from community members that utilise the skills being developed and trained. This has the potential to transform communities with limited employment opportunities into significant hubs for IT development and digital entrepreneurship. Please note that these thoughts have not been specifically raised with indigenous community members in Doomadgee to gain their perspective, however given the connection that we have this is something I intend to do in coming months. Clearly implementing such a strategy has far-reaching potential for social change within remote communities which could produce highly positive or seriously detrimental results, therefore local engagement on the issue is vital.

As a final point, for over a decade there has been talk of Web2.0, a transformation of the internet into a completely user-oriented experience whereby everyday people can engage high-powered information technology to learn, buy, work, and communicate. While some have taken Web2.0 on board to re-define their function in a digital age (ie. [Open Universities](#), [Ebay](#), [Amazon](#)), there is still a massive amount of

Submission 032

Date received: 18/02/2011

change to come in the way that we engage with technology. The NBN provides the infrastructure for Australian developers and innovators to capitalise on opportunities to be at the forefront of innovation and drive sustainable economic development in coming decades.

I hope these thoughts are helpful, please feel free to contact me if further details would be of use.

--

Kind Regards,
Paul J Berkman