



The Secretary
Standing Committee on Infrastructure & Communications
House of Representatives
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Dear Sir/Madam

TAFE NSW - North Coast Institute welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the Federal Government's current Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network.

We believe the National Broadband Network (NBN) will benefit our communities by greatly improving the educational resources and training available for teachers and students. The rollout of the NBN will also enhance North Coast TAFE'S ability to provide customised teaching and learning and contribute to the social and economic development of the region.

The NBN will create the following opportunities:

- The use of quality rich media that works in real time for students studying in TAFE campuses from home, council libraries or learning centres. Whilst some rich media will currently run across the DET network, people working from home whether they have Broadband or dial-up currently struggle to have media (videos, audio, and animations) run smoothly. The introduction of the NBN will mean staff and students will see images in sharp detail in real time and Movie quality instructional video can be transmitted in a live interactive context.

Being able to view "rich media" will provide students with a greater appreciation of what is being described or demonstrated and allow them to capture assessment tasks in the workplace. Students completing complex physical tasks as part of an assessment in their work place will be able to share their work with their teacher or project team and receive real time feedback. Examples include but are by no means limited to:

- A hairdressing student (with the client's permission) will be able to make a video recording of their initial fact finding interview, then record and appraise their practical skills and conclude with an exit interview or client satisfaction assessment.
- In horticulture the same technology will give us good resolution to assess the potting of nursery stock. As well, the teacher can demonstrate the skill to a remote student. Different tools such as camera glasses used in conjunction with the improved band width will help the teacher to see fine detail.
- Commercial cookery students can demonstrate knife skills as they use them in their workplace. Assessors will be able to review safety, speed and the quality of the product.

- The development of virtual environments for teaching skills in complex, hazardous or capital intensive industries. Examples include simulations of complex or large machinery, mine safety training and fire-fighting simulations all available to students accessing the tuition from a variety of places including their own home.
- Greater integration of the NSW Department of Education's existing "Connected Classrooms" Program with live discussion between classrooms, industry specialists and guest speakers from remote and global locations. It will encourage the inclusion of people studying from remote or home locations in training opportunities.
- Better use of Personal Computer communication software e.g. Adobe Connect. North Coast TAFE is currently unable to make full use of the features in this program such as video interaction using web cams due to lack of band width. Current audio recordings often "stagger" and the quality of the recording playback will improve.
- There will be increased opportunity to use third party resources that in the past may have struggled to be usable (i.e. lag time) as they were built for US or European broadband networks. This will mean that we can customise good quality resources if available rather than build similar resources from scratch.
- There will be increased opportunities to partner with industry in the development of a digitally skilled work force with training via a link up with TAFE and the work place. This will be particularly useful in specialist skill areas including integrated telecommunications training and capital intensive resources industries.
- We will be able to develop knowledge management strategies that include storage of rich media files in databases. Students will develop eportfolios from the point of initial enrolment, improving and transferring them throughout their career. There is a potential record keeping benefit for North Coast TAFE. Staff will develop eportfolios to meet AQTF guidelines and record career highlights. For example a video receiving an award or a recording of them demonstrating a task. This will enable educational institutions, (with the student/staff members permission) to contribute to the national archive. For example the early work of an artist will be archived for posterity.

Our training courses will be able to compete in global markets and have the opportunity to create viable commercial courses with rich media and real time interaction. Conversely, without a universal high speed broadband network Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) training will become increasingly uncompetitive as large population centres develop the capability and their citizens access services from (overseas) suppliers operating in environments where such bandwidth has supported the development of interactive VET resources.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input to your inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Elizabeth McGregor
Institute Director

24 February 2011