Upper Lachlan Shire Council

All correspondence addressed to the General Manager, PO Box 42, Gunning NSW 2581

Crookwell Office: 44 Spring Street, Crookwell NSW 2583
p: 02 4830 1000 | f: 02 4832 2066 | e: council@upperlachlan.nsw.gov.au | www.upperlachlan.local-e.nsw.gov.au

Gunning Office: 123 Yass Street, Gunning NSW 2581
p: 02 4845 4100 | f: 02 4845 1426 | e: council@upperlachlan.nsw.gov.au

Taralga Office: Taralga Community Service Centre, Orchard Street, Taralga NSW 2580
p: 02 4840 2099 | f: 4840 2296 | e: taralgacsc@celinternet.com.au

ABN 81 011 241 552

Our Ref: Government Relations - Submissions
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24 February 2011

Mr Andrew McGowan
Inquiry Secretary
Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications
P O Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr McGowan

Thank you for your letter dated 9 December 2010 with regard to the new inquiry into the National Broadband Network and requesting input from Upper Lachlan Shire Council.

Upper Lachlan Shire covers an area of some 7,243 sq kms with a population of 7512 spread across three towns – Gunning, Crookwell and Taralga and eight villages - Laggan, Binda, Tuena, Bigga, Collector, Breadalbane, Grabben Gullen and Dalton. Most of these rural towns and villages do not have reliable access to broadband internet services from multiple ISPs. During recent Community Strategic Planning meetings held across the Shire to implement the new Integrated Planning and Reporting requirement for Council, provision of broadband access was listed as a needed infrastructure outcome for Upper Lachlan.

Council is committed to service delivery; broadband improvements would significantly assist not only economically, but for social interaction interfaces of IT services. The Community Technology Centres in the isolated outlying villages of Bigga and Tuena are examples of Council's proven commitment to providing IT services to its communities.

Upper Lachlan Shire sees the roll out of the National Broadband Network as essential to enabling local economic opportunities for business growth within the Shire. The ability for our region to conduct business activities on an equal basis to those in more populated locations would provide a chance for expansion of those businesses and possible population growth in the Shire as well.

Access to Government services via the internet would benefit the youth of the Shire who are increasingly turning to new forms of social media to interact with their peers and the community. The aged will benefit from having access to E-Government services as some services and information will also be provided more efficiently and outside normal business hours.

In the area of education, the opportunity for improving the educational resources and training available for teachers and students and the use of E-learning resources benefits the whole community as do programs which promote the use of e-health initiatives and Health Management Information Systems (HMIS). The result of access to these types of services and information will see a marked improvement in the delivery and access to health care and medical procedures which are currently unavailable in regional Australia.

Access to Internet services should be affordable with equal availability to all members of the community. Pricing should be uniform and competitive to ensure a high take up of this service to allow the community to benefit in the areas outlined above.

Yours faithfully

JK Bell
General Manager