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LORD MAYOR'S OFFICE
TOWN HALL
MACQUARIE STREET
HOBART
TASMANIA

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

Dear Mr McGowan

I refer to correspondence received on 9 December 2010 inviting the Hobart City Council to provide feedback to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications' inquiry into the National Broadband Network (NBN).

The Council would like to provide the following comments on the issues raised in your correspondence:

The delivery of government services and programs

- The capacity of the NBN to deliver government services and programs will have minimal impact but may transfer some clients to online.
- May affect accessibility.

Achieving health outcomes

- E-health potential is great however the limiting factor is the user – need to explore where the tipping point is in moving from providing quality service into forcing people to engage with a service using an undesired medium.

The management of Australia's built and natural resources and environmental sustainability

- While real-time monitoring is increased the provision of wireless coverage in remote location is the critical element.

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Impacting regional economic growth and employment opportunities

- E-business opportunities do have the potential to diversify business location and therefore provide economic stimulus for smaller communities – this could be a competitive advantage if supply lines for distribution are shortened.
- It is recognised that Tasmania has been the poor cousin compared to the mainland states when it comes to high speed internet. The lack of competitive infrastructure has been limiting.
The NBN will provide greater access and competition in the provision of Internet services, providing there are services developed to take advantage of the higher speed service, otherwise customers will revert to a cheaper option.

Impacting business efficiencies and revenues, particularly for small and medium business, and Australia's export market

- The NCN will see shifts in the proportion of production – distribution – and retail businesses, with retail the area that is likely to be affected.
- The impact on access to international markets is likely to be positive, given the obvious increase in timelines.

Interaction with research and development and related innovation investments

- The combination of modern infrastructure and a natural environment should be a bonus for Tasmania, making it an attractive location for research and development – water, sewerage, power and transport infrastructure would need to be equally 'modernised' in certain areas in order to maximise the benefit.

Facilitating community and social benefits

- The possibilities for the community are around increased accessibility, community identity and promotion, and localised connectivity (in a social sense).
- The success of the NBN as 'community building' piece of infrastructure is dependent on the degree to which it addresses digital disadvantage; and, while it can be argued there is an equality in 'everyone being connected', this only addresses the locational aspect of the disadvantage.
- Digital literacy and affordability must be considered as part of any plan to provide service to the community through the NBN as well as the means by which the service can be delivered to the same level to those who choose not to e-connect.
- As exciting as the provision of a digital infrastructure is for the country, it must be assumed it will never have the capacity to replace human contact, but can be utilised as a medium to value-add to it.

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The optimal capacity and technological requirements of a network to deliver these outcomes

- The NBNs technological capacity to deliver on these outcomes is substantial – the capacity limiter is digital disadvantage.
- From a general household perspective, it is essential the pricing of NBN services are in line with current ADSL services and setup costs.

I look forward to hearing of the outcomes of this inquiry into the National Broadband Network.

Yours sincerely

~~Alderman Rob Valentine~~
LORD MAYOR

~~Thursday~~ 24 February 2011