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**Regional
Development**
Australia

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To Whom It May Concern

Inquiry into the National Broadband Network

I write on behalf of the Board of Regional Development Australia Mid North Coast (NSW) to the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications regarding the new Inquiry into the National Broadband Network.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a partnership between the Australian, NSW and Local Governments to develop and strengthen the regional communities of Australia. RDA MNC is responsible to the key stakeholders for the development of a Regional Plan, which describes the Mid North Coast, its attributes, industry, social profile, employment and key advantages and barriers to development and sustainability. The Regional Plan sets out the Social, Economic, Environmental and Cultural vision for the Region which alongside effective Governance identifies the strengths, barriers and opportunities as a list of actions that will inform the key stakeholders of the Mid North Coast's regional priorities

The RDA MNC vision is that "The people of the Mid North Coast live and work in a place of innovation, opportunity and inclusion which makes the region a leader in social, environmental, cultural and economic sustainability". The RDA MNC Regional Plan was prepared in four sections. Section 1 - Statements, Context and Process; Section 2 - Regional Priority Plan (2010-2030) & Implementation Strategies (2010-2015); Section 3 - Research and Region Characteristics; and Section 4 - Consultation, Partners, Key Issues and Strategies. The introduction of High speed Broadband and the proposal for the National Broadband Network (NBN) features positively in each of those sections. Particular citation to the positive benefits are identified in the Implications for the Region within the Research and Regional Characteristics (Section 3) in each of the subsections Social, Environmental, Cultural, Economic and Governance. Importantly the issue of the introduction of High speed broadband and the NBN is identified in the Principle Objectives of the Regional Plan "Connecting our People, Coast and Valleys". The Regional Plan Implementation Priorities further identifies the strategy "Collaborate with our Communities to prepare critical Infrastructure Strategies: with immediate priorities: high speed broadband; skilled & educated regional, workforce; aged care services, culture & recreation, Pacific Highway and Roads; Local bridges; Transport, (incl Air & Rail services); Energy, & Water, Public buildings for health, education and culture (Page 25)

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The RDA MNC Regional Plan is published on-line on our website: www.rdamidnorthcoast.org.au and is available to the Standing Committee for reference.

The RDA MNC Regional Plan continues with a second Principle Objective "Connecting our region to our neighbours & our country". This objective proffers collaboration with our neighbouring RDA Regions to build on and promote the resources of the whole region. Consistent with this approach the RDA MNC has acted as the lead agency for the proposal to establish the Eastern Regional Digital Corridor (ERDC). Via our authorship and the contributions of the RDA network organisations the RDA Northern Rivers, Hunter and Central Coast and other partner organisations including Southern Cross University, North Coast TAFE, Coffs Harbour Council and others has developed a broader regional approach to the implementation of the NBN that will have significant impact for our region.

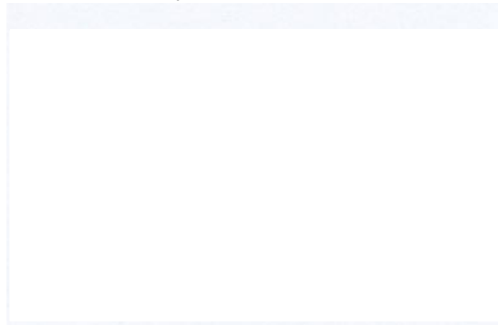
The Eastern Regional Corridor includes 26 Councils from Gosford in the South to Tweed in the North. The estimated current population (ABS 2009) is nearly 1.19 million residents. The population growth rate of the corridor averages 1.7% significantly higher than the national expectations of the Intergenerational Report of 1.2%. Of further significance is the high proportion of indigenous residents in the region.

Consequently a full submission has been prepared that examines the Eastern Regional Corridor in terms of the task of the Standing Committees to "examine the capacity of the National Broadband Network to contribute to: 9 categories of services (Items A-J incl). This submission is supported by the identified contributors as a joint submission while some organisations have also made individual contributions.

In conclusion the identified need across the Mid North Coast matches the National agenda focus of participation and productivity and will be enhanced with the broader focus of the Eastern Regional Corridor proposal for an early rollout of the NBN. Participation data indicates the workforce participation rates are as low as 51% in parts of the region, against a national backdrop of 65% and in light of the national goal to increase it to 69%. High speed broadband is a fundamental piece of infrastructure needed to change the picture. Across the Mid North Coast regions 85% of businesses employ less than 5 people (many are sole traders). The NBN will allow business owners and entrepreneurs to transform their business models in ways that create local jobs while bringing much needed experts into the region and also allow us to rapidly transform education (by making skills development more accessible for disadvantaged people to get the qualifications to participate in work). In addition the identified social needs for health and in particular in consideration of the significantly higher age profile of the region the NBN will add significant value to health care systems and cost savings to government and the community through improved access and services

RDA Mid North Coast is pleased to include Coffs Harbour in its constituency as one of the first 19 sites for the national NBN rollout. There is significant expectation in the Mid North Coast that Coffs may be the "beach-head" for an early rollout of the NBN to the vibrant Eastern Regional Corridor.

Yours faithfully



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Executive Offer
RDA Mid North Coast