

GOONDIWINDI TRAINING & TECHNOLOGY

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Submission 167

Date received: 28/02/2011

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

By email to: ic.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr McGowan

Re: New Inquiry into the National Broadband Network (NBN)

On behalf of Goondiwindi SILO Inc (SILO) I put forth the following comments for consideration for the inquiry into the NBN.

SILO Background Information

SILO (Schools Industry Links Outreach) is a school/industry/community partnership with a focus on creating rural training and employment opportunities across south west Queensland. It was formed in 1999 and became an incorporated not-for-profit entity in 2000. The Goondiwindi Training and Technology Centre (GTT) is an initiative conceived by SILO in response to deficiencies in local training infrastructure and capabilities, which constituted a significant disadvantage for employers and organisations in the Border Rivers region.

Completed in October 2003, GTT is located on Education Queensland land adjacent to the Goondiwindi State High School campus. It is a specialised training facility which attracts a broad range of training as well as providing specialised meeting facilities. GTT operates on a commercial basis allowing the community, businesses and professional organisations access to the training and meeting infrastructure at cost-effective rates.

SILO does not receive any ongoing funding for recurrent expenses. A full time Executive Officer was appointed in September 2003 and currently SILO employs fourteen staff including specialist trainers and youth workers. In 2010 GTT expanded its business westwards, opening an office in Cunnamulla to service young people throughout the South West Queensland region.

Impact of NBN

In addition to managing GTT, SILO continually seeks ways to enhance employment skills and build the capacity of the community. The dynamic, diverse and progressive Border Rivers community has reversed the trend in many rural areas by showing strong economic growth. This is reflected in its broad business base and low unemployment rate of the district.

Rural producers in the region and the service industries associated with them have increasingly sophisticated needs. SILO recognises that for our industries, businesses and community to grow and prosper in a highly competitive environment, investment in infrastructure is absolutely vital. It is therefore essential that NBN provides rural and remote communities such as ours with reliable access to cost effective and fast broadband services.

Potential Benefits to our Region

If the proposed NBN has the capacity to provide our region with consistent high speed connection to broadband which is equivalent to the metropolitan service, then it is envisaged that our region would benefit through:

- significant cost efficiencies and increased access to service and information for the local community including improved access to information management, online storage and cloud computing
- improved access to government services
- improved standard and range of health services provided within the region including real time diagnosis, data sharing and remote access to specialist medical services
- greater access to internet based learning systems, software and information ensuring the community's learners of all ages are no longer disadvantaged by their remoteness
- partnerships with universities and other research centres
- immediate access to forms of data collection and analysis that will in turn improve the quality of local decision making - as rural industries move to more scientific management systems for water, soil quality, cropping and animal production the need for real time data collection and analysis is becoming essential to ensure the environmental and economic sustainability of the region
- opening up of new market opportunities for local businesses through ecommerce as the traditional regional barrier of distance is removed
- whole of community access to social media platforms ensuring access and equity
- increased ability for the region to attract, retain and upskill local workforce

The delivery of a stable, high speed and fair priced data network to our region is critical to bridge the digital divide with commercial access to the fibre footprint essential for a sustainable future for our community.

SILO welcomes the opportunity to positively contribute to the NBN inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further input.

Yours sincerely

Esme Cairns
Executive Officer