

Suite 4.02, 55 Mountain St
ULTIMO NSW 2007
Ph: 02 9288 4000
Fax: 02 9288 4019
Email: info@accan.org.au
www.accan.org.au

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Committee Secretary
Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Via email

Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Fibre Deployment) Bill 2011

ACCAN thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment. We believe this Bill contains welcome measures to ensure that new developments will not be left behind during the transition from copper to fibre infrastructure.

ACCAN's concerns lie primarily with one of the background policy settings announced in the Policy Statement on Fibre in New Developments of 9 December 2010. The policy relates to Telstra's provision of transitional services, specifically wireless services, for developments of less than 100 premises.

Telstra have informed us that this policy is not finalised and has not yet been implemented, although they already provide interim wireless phones in circumstances where copper infrastructure will take a long time to be provided.

However, we have been contacted by consumers who say they have been provided with interim wireless phones by Telstra and have also been told they will need to wait for the NBN rollout to reach their area before they can get any fixed line internet service.

Given the nine-year timetable for the NBN rollout, ACCAN is concerned that this group of people may be waiting a significant period of time for fibre (potentially several years) and be significantly disadvantaged.

We would urge the Government to clearly define in what circumstances Telstra is allowed to provide wireless instead of copper and what is a reasonable period of time for such an interim measure.

ACCAN submits that premises should not be left without a fixed line internet service for an unreasonably long period.

We also believe it is reasonable to require of Telstra that each of the premises in this situation be provided with a wireless internet service free of charge or at a discounted price. Although this type of service does not compare well with most ADSL services, it would go some way to compensating people who find themselves in this interim situation.

Jonathan Gadir
Senior Policy Adviser
jonathan.gadir@accan.org.au