



# Broken Hill City Council

*... a safe, vibrant, prosperous and culturally rich City achieved through community leadership and sustainable management.*

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FZ:KW

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July 22, 2011

Chair,  
Joint Committee of the National Broadband Network,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Email: [jcnbn@aph.gov.au](mailto:jcnbn@aph.gov.au)

Dear Sir,

## **National Broadband Network - Broken Hill**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Joint Committee and formally extend a welcome to the City of Broken Hill for the Committee hearing to be held on 27 July 2011.

Council views the roll out of the National Broadband Network as a key enabling infrastructure for the City of Broken Hill and region and a critical part of retaining and attracting residents, business and industry to Far West NSW.

### **Background**

#### ***The City***

The City of Broken Hill (area 179sq km) is the largest regional centre in the western half of New South Wales. It lies in the centre of the sparsely settled New South Wales Outback, close to the South Australian border and midway between the Queensland and Victorian borders. The nearest large population centre is Mildura in Victoria, 300 kms distant to the south on the Murray River. The nearest large city is Adelaide, capital of South Australia, approximately 500 kms to the southwest. Because of its location Broken Hill has strong cultural and historical connections with South Australia. The city area is surrounded by and is a regional service centre to the Unincorporated Area of NSW and adjoining shire and district communities.

The most recent estimates place the population at 20,000. This represents a 30% decline since 1971, mainly related to the decline in the local mining industry. However, in recent years the population has stabilised somewhat and the rate of decline has slowed. Mining development and exploration activity both in the City and surrounding region has seen a resurgence during the past few years around high commodity prices - the cycle continues as it has in the City for the past 128 years, and remains buoyant for the foreseeable term.

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Tourism is widely regarded as a strong performer and not subject to the impacts of the mining industry. Although the industry across NSW has been negatively affected by drought, floods and the exchange rate, a number of national and international factors have helped to increase visitor numbers to Broken Hill and region over recent years with total visitors to Outback NSW increasing from 614,000 in 2009 to 681,000 in 2010 (11% increase).

Current nomination of Broken Hill for national heritage listing if successful will see “the Hill that changed a nation” rightly recognised for its place and role in the nation’s development.

Council infrastructure improvements together with film making, retail and renewable energy developments in and around the City will also mean a vibrant and culturally rich Broken Hill will continue to be a liveable regional city for the longer term.

### ***The Organisation***

Broken Hill City Council is an award winning organisation recognised by the local government industry and other levels of government and industry sectors in NSW, nationally and internationally with a range of impressive achievements over many years.

Council currently employs 275 full time, part time and casual employees, giving a total of 235 equivalent full time employees.

Council provides a significant range of services to the city and regional community. Council operates a broad “services to property and people” portfolio of community business and invests heavily in social capital.

Council presently owns or manages infrastructure assets of \$223M and faces juggling competing community needs and priorities within a limited financial resource base.

Council’s annual operating budget is approximately \$30M (2011). Income from rates and annual charges is in the order of \$12.8M or 43% of its total annual revenue. The balance of income is primarily from Commonwealth and State Government operating grants and contributions (\$9.45M) and user charges and fees (\$4.1M).

This collectively means that service provision and asset management in particular within this environment is a major challenge for the organisation.

Council’s challenge is to continue to adjust to change after years of population decline and effectively manage its community assets - in a demanding environment for provision of services with increasing government and community accountability.

### ***Our Vision***

***“Broken Hill will be a safe, vibrant, prosperous and culturally rich City through community leadership and sustainable management”***

In line with this Vision, the Council aims that Broken Hill in 2022 will be a community that boasts:

- a stable or increasing population;
- a more balanced age structure, especially by retaining young people;
- an expanding economy;
- an increase in employment and education opportunities;
- a safe environment in which to live; and

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- a range of services that is comparable with those enjoyed by larger communities, including cultural, community and recreational services.

Council will be an organisation with:

- strong and effective leadership;
- a healthy and sustainable financial position;
- a safe workplace;
- a highly skilled and motivated workforce;
- a set of satisfied customers; and
- cost efficient and effective business processes.

### ***Our Mission***

***“Council will provide responsive community leadership and high quality services in a sustainable manner to maintain and enhance Broken Hill’s lifestyle”***

### **Terms of Reference**

- (1) That a Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network (NBN) be appointed to inquire into and report on the rollout of the NBN;
- (2) that every six months, commencing 31 August 2011, until the NBN is complete and operational, the Committee provide progress reports to both Houses of Parliament and to shareholder Ministers on:
  - (a) the rollout of the NBN, including in relation to the Government’s objective for NBN Co. Limited (NBN Co.) to:
    - (i) connect 93 per cent of Australian homes, schools and businesses with fibre-to-the premises technology providing broadband speeds of up to 100 megabits per second, with a minimum fibre coverage obligation of 90 per cent of Australian premises; and
    - (ii) service all remaining premises by a combination of next-generation fixed wireless and satellite technologies providing peak speeds of at least 12 megabits per second;
  - (b) the achievement of take-up targets (including premises passed and covered and services activated) as set out in NBN Co.’s Corporate Plan released on 20 December 2010 as revised from time to time;
  - (c) network rollout performance including service levels and faults;
  - (d) the effectiveness of NBN Co. in meeting its obligations as set out in its Stakeholder Charter;
  - (e) NBN Co.’s strategy for engaging with consumers and handling complaints;
  - (f) NBN Co.’s risk management processes; and
  - (g) Any other matter pertaining to the NBN rollout that the Committee considers relevant.

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**What is Council doing in response?**

- (i) Council is a strong advocate for the roll out of the backhaul black spots infrastructure – enabling NBN rollout and backhaul is currently under construction in and around Broken Hill and region.
- (ii) Council has established in partnership with RDA Far West a Digital Economy Working Group to develop and progress a key enabling Digital Economy Strategy for Broken Hill and the Far West NSW Region.
- (iii) Key components of the proposed Broken Hill Digital Economy Strategy will align with the National Strategy – including online participation by households, online engagement by businesses and not-for profit organisations, smarter management of the local environment and infrastructure, improved health and aged care, expanded online education, increased teleworking, improved online government service delivery and engagement – as strategic outcomes.

**What is Council requesting the Inquiry to consider?**

- (iv) Australian Government and NBN Co funding support for partnering with regional, rural and remote Local Governments and Regional Development Australia to assist them to understand, develop and progress the enabling digital economy strategies for their particular region.
- (v) Requesting NBN Co. to consider key strategic locations including Broken Hill for priority roll out of the NBN.
- (vi) The key reasons for Broken Hill being a priority location for the NBN rollout are,
  - 1. Additional telecommunications capacity will assist to improve the commercial viability of major projects that are planned in the region and to attract the service and support businesses to the region that are reliant on telecommunications.
  - 2. This has a projected additional value added Gross Regional Product benefit of \$54m for the region over the next 2 years – refer attached regional update.
  - 3. Economic Stimulus that will result from the direct investment in the region through the construction phase of the network and ongoing maintenance of the infrastructure.
  - 4. Additional access to competitive high speed data carrying capacity will improve the pricing, service and business opportunities in the region.
  - 5. From Broken Hill the additional network capacity can be distributed throughout our region, providing a valuable communication asset for mining, primary industries, film, renewable energy projects and other economic development that may not otherwise be possible.
  - 6. Improved ability to develop high quality educational opportunities in the region – connected campuses.
  - 7. Opportunities for more sophisticated and cost effective health service delivery (remote diagnosis, link to remote specialist clinics during local procedures)

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8. Improved telecommunications access for clinical placement programs by the Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health for Broken Hill and region.
9. Improving telecommunications access for smaller indigenous communities in the region
10. Improved access and integration of Broken Hill City Council services across a range of remote sites including Airport, Regional Aquatic Centre, Landfill and Youth Services.

Thank you again for the opportunity to assist the Committee by providing information relevant to the Terms of Reference.

Council looks forward to progressing the key issues raised in partnership with the Australian Government and the NBN Co. to best effect.

Yours faithfully,



FRANK ZAKNICH  
GENERAL MANAGER