

25 July 2012

The Secretary
Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Sent by email to: jcnbn@aph.gov.au

Dear Members of the Joint Committee

The rollout of high speed broadband in Broken Hill is one of the most important improvements that can be made to the lives of the many thousands of people who live in Far West NSW. I recently finished a PAYE job in the area and have started my own business specialising in change management.

Should I be fortunate in identifying clients, my focus in the years ahead is to enrich and empower individuals and organisations through superior handling of change. As you are all aware, some of the greatest change around concerns technology – not just the national broadband network, but all the machinery and processes that make the world revolve – ie the broadest interpretation of ‘technology’. Critical to my business is reliable connectivity to the Internet. My business cannot exist without the Internet.

The difference between me having a good business and a great business is quality and reliability of the Internet. You must appreciate that at present, the older communications network in Broken Hill is insufficient and not fit for purpose for contemporary business activities. The mobile network is a poor fallback position as it is increasingly congested and getting slower.

I am running out of connectivity options as a business start-up.

It is a challenge to do this type of work whilst based in Broken Hill because the geographic distances do make travel expensive in terms of costs and time. Yet I should be able to do this work here and I should not be penalised because I live here. The Grattan Institute released a report called Social Cities in March 2012, to highlight challenges like social isolation due to congested lifestyles. See it at this site: http://grattan.edu.au/static/files/assets/b83340b2/137_report_social_cities_web.pdf. It really is a quite depressing read and should provoke the debate for increased decentralisation in our nation.

Cities do not need to be so congested and isolating for humans. About 8 out of every 10 persons in Australia lives in a city or its enlarged peri-urban area. The NBN has the capacity to open up options for people to relocate. Improved communications and transport systems have the potential to decentralise Australia. Companies could also relocate to open spaces and find the breathing room necessary to adapt to the key changes underway in global commerce. Broken Hill could be an ideal location for such an exercise – data centres, technology incubators, software development and service centres. This is just one way the NBN can unlock potential for Far West NSW and for others like me who choose to live and work here. Delaying the rollout of the broadband to this area is not a good idea. In fact, hastening the rollout of the NBN here will be a smart result for the national economy, and take pressure off cities.

Yours faithfully

Linda Nadge
Principal
Change Agent nb Pty Ltd