

10 JUL 2015



The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS

Dr Dennis Jensen MP  
Chair of the Standing Committee on Petitions  
Member for Tangney  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

## **Response to Petition reference 1041/1526: improved broadband options in Forster Keys**

Dear Dr. Jensen

Thank you for your recent correspondence dated 25 May 2015 concerning a petition lodged with the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding broadband access in Forster Keys in New South Wales.

Access to ADSL broadband services can be limited or not available for a range of technical reasons. These include how far a home or business is from the exchange, the availability of ports in that exchange, and the use of line sharing technologies such as pair gain or remote integrated multiplexers (technologies which allow more people to connect to telephone services using existing copper lines).

ADSL services are typically not available where cable length exceeds 4-5 kilometres as electrical signals degrade in proportion with cable length. Telstra have indicated that the premises in Forster Keys are fed copper directly from the local exchange. In the case of some premises in Forster Keys, they are beyond the distance limits of ADSL technology. Research conducted by the Department supports this view, as data from the Broadband Availability and Quality project estimates an average distance from exchange to premises in Forster Keys of approximately 5400m.

I understand the residents' disappointment in not being able to access a fixed internet connection. Their concerns about being able to access ADSL are not unusual. Currently, up to one-and-a-half million households are in areas that have no or limited access to fixed broadband. As broadband providers are private companies, operational decisions such as providing additional ADSL infrastructure are commercial matters for each company to consider.

As the residents have noted, Forster Keys is not currently on the nbn National Rollout Plan and this will be disappointing to the residents. However, they can be assured that the rollout will continue to accelerate. The nbn will release an indicative three-year construction schedule around the middle of this year, providing even more certainty to businesses and homeowners.

Rollout of the network across Australia is a staged process that involves careful planning, design, construction and activation, ensuring that the network is rolled out in the most organised, effective and efficient way possible.

The next-generation fixed wireless network is being engineered specifically to deliver high-speed broadband to regional and remote communities. Fixed wireless networks are not like mobile phone networks in terms of congestion. They are designed to meet the speed and service requirements for the specific number of users in each coverage area. This means that, unlike mobile phone networks, the fixed wireless network can be specifically configured for the area so the speed and connection remain consistent and stable, even during peak times like early evening.

By necessity, both fixed wireless areas and fixed line service area modules will have premises at their boundaries, and these premises may be next to, or across from, other premises which have nbn access. Boundaries are set having regard to service levels and capacity (the number of premises that can be serviced without compromising service quality).

Unfortunately, the solution proposed by the residents, which would see Forster Keys receive an interim nbn fixed wireless service from the tower in Booti, is not possible. Moving boundaries and adding additional premises into service areas on an ad hoc basis impacts on the quality of service provided through nbn and serves to shift the problem one premises along (i.e. premises on the new boundary line will have the same complaint) and defeats the purpose of a carefully planned and efficient roll out.

The Australian Government has committed to ensuring that Australia's new broadband network will be made available to every Australian family and business by 2020. To deliver this rollout commitment, nbn has developed a set of deployment principles aiming to utilise existing infrastructure where possible, factor in construction partner capacity across Australia and take advantage of advances in technology.

As more information is released on the rollout, my office will be working with nbn to inform all Australians about when they can expect fixed line broadband upgrades. I also encourage the residents of Forster Keys to register their details with the nbn website to enable them to receive updates on the network rollout schedule for their locality.

Thank you for raising this matter. I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely 

Malcolm Turnbull