

12 July 2009

Mr Phillip Mason  
Assistant Secretary  
National Broadband Network and Fibre Roll-out Regulation  
GPO Box 2154  
Canberra ACT 2154

Your ref: SC20090400383

Dear Mr Mason

Thank you for your letter of 23 June last in response to my emails to Messrs Kevin Rudd and Stephen Conroy regarding the aerial roll out of fibre optic broadband cable.

Firstly, let me say that I agree with the Australian Government's policy regarding access to affordable, fast broadband and its necessity to the way that Australians communicate and do business. It is the proposed archaic, inefficient and unreliable infrastructure that I disagree with. Stringing an 18mm broadband cable aerially across Australia is certainly not nation building nor is it world's best practice.

In most parts of the western world and, indeed in many parts of the underdeveloped world, power and communication cables are now being rolled out through underground ducting. By burying the cables you are ensuring that the service, whether it be power or communication, is available at all times, particularly in times of most need, eg bushfires and storms. World's best practice!

In 1994 my suburb of southern Sydney, Bonnet Bay, was engulfed in bush fire - refer photo 1. The precinct that I reside in is surrounded by bush - refer diagram 1. As fire approached the first services to succumb were power and communication (our copper telephone cables are also strung aerially).

There is no need to tell you what impact this had on stranded residents who could not pump water or communicate with the outside world through either

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telephone or media. Our power and all communication cables remain in the air - refer photographs 2 and 3. Under what I understand the Government's proposal

to be, we will now have an even bigger cable strung between poles and 15 years after our last fire we will be in no better position when the next fire comes. Surely we are not alone in this situation.

My proposal is to get all levels of Government talking to each other with a view to rolling out both reliable and efficient nationwide broadband and an optimised power distribution system, using world's best practice delivery – underground cables. By doing this the cost is spread across authorities. As an example you are proposing an expenditure of \$43 billion to rollout broadband while at the same time the NSW Government is proposing an expenditure of \$18 billion on upgrading its antiquated electricity distribution network. This latter expenditure, from what I understand does not include optimising the network. Surely there are economies and efficiencies to be obtained by both parties in working together for the betterment of the community and nation building.

Mr Mason, I leave these thoughts with you and hope to see all levels of Australian Government working together in this praiseworthy and long overdue exercise. If we don't "bite the bullet" now we will need to wait, who knows how long, before we get a Government with foresight and the will to do the right thing. We will also be leaving future generations of Australians with a white elephant which will cost may more billions of dollars to rectify.

Yours sincerely

Greg Bleazard

cc Mr Kevin Rudd, Prime Minister  
Mr Anthony Albanese, Minister for Infrastructure  
Mr Stephen Conroy, Minister for Communications  
Mr Nick Minchin, Shadow Minister for Communications.  
Mr Bob Brown, Senator, Leader Greens  
Mr Nick Xenophon, Senator  
Mr Steve Fielding, Senator  
Mr Nathan Rees, Premier, NSW  
Mr Ian Macdonald, Minister for Energy, NSW  
Mr Peter Downey, Chairman Cables Downunder.  
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