16 June 2017

nbn.joint@aph.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Rollout of the National Broadband Network

Please find attached an amended submission in regards to the above mentioned inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Claire Wiseman
Chief Executive Officer

SUBMISSION FOR THE INQUIRY INTO THE ROLLOUT OF THE NATIONAL BROADBAND NETWORK

The Far North SA Region

The Far North region of South Australia, as per Regional Development Australia Committee boundaries, covers approximately 80% of South Australia. The area has a land mass of just under 800,000km^2 with a population of [1]28,212 and incorporates the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands. The region takes in the iconic Flinders Ranges and Outback region, popular and well visited tourism destinations in the State. The Flinders Ranges is also now recognised as a National Landscape.

The main townships in the region include (but are not limited to) Port Augusta, Quorn, Hawker, Leigh Creek, Copley, Lyndhurst, Marree, Innamincka, William Creek, Oodnadatta, Marla, Mintabie, Coober Pedy, Glendambo, Pimba, Woomera and Roxby Downs. Some of these remote townships are between 800 - 1,000 kilometres from Port Augusta, the largest city in the region (population of [1]13,985).

A region's comparative advantage can stem from various resources, such as its geographical location, availability of natural resources, the existence of industry clusters, access to infrastructure or the skill profile of the local population. These underlying attributes influence the types of economic activity that are likely to be successful. They also have implications for development initiatives, which are generally more effective where they build on an existing strength.

NBN Readiness Program

In 2012 Regional Development Australia Far North (RDAFN) in partnership with Regional Development Australian Yorke and Mid North was successful in gaining $50,000 funding under the Funding for Regional Development Australia committees to maximise the benefits of a digital economy enabled by the National Broadband Network (NBN), NBN Readiness Projects Round Two, for the development of localised websites and supporting roadshows.

The development of the localised websites was focused on providing a more 'cut-through' content. They were central hubs of NBN information and resources which featured rich video content for educational and instructional elements of the NBN rollout, directories of NBN service providers, service provider registration forms, news and comments features, local stories and case studies, categorized online tools and software, roadshow calendar and event registration. Websites were created for each township that was part of the program e.g. portaugustanbn.com.au, roxbydownsnbn.comau etc. The websites proved very popular as a central portal to go access to seek localised NBN information and was heightened by businesses/service providers having access to upload their own profiles and keep the information up to date. Unfortunately, due to the unavailability of ongoing funding, the websites were shut down 12 months after they were launched.

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[1] ABS Census Data, 2011

Roadshows, which were conducted with RDAFN staff, Stellar Digital (website developer) and nbn co staff were rolled out around the Far North and Yorke and Mid North Regions in the following townships:

- Coober Pedy
- Roxby Downs
- Port Augusta
- Port Pirie
- Kadina
- Clare

The roadshows proved very popular with very good attendance numbers at each session and the added bonus of having nbn co as a presenter enabled businesses and residents to ask questions about the rollout in the early stages.

RDAFN and nbn co Partnership in 2016/17

RDAFN has kept in close contact with nbn co staff in the last few years, as NBN has been rolled out in the Far North region. In the 2016/17 financial year the following promotion of NBN has been carried out in conjunction with nbn co:

- nbn co had a stall at the Augusta Markets event on 26 November 2016
- RDAFN held a Flinders Ranges Business Forum on 3 April 2017, of which nbn was a key presenter
- In addition to the forum above, nbn co had a presence in the township of Quorn over a couple of days to answer any queries from residents and businesses. RDAFN assisted in the majority of the promotion for this initiative.
- nbn co travelled to Coober Pedy and Roxby Downs from 23-25 May 2017 and held information sessions with local businesses and residents. RDAFN accompanied nbn co staff on this trip and also carried out the majority of sponsorship and organisation of the sessions.

It is worth noting that RDAFN is also currently working with the Polaris Centre and rolling out a series of Digital Growth workshops across the region. These workshops are designed to assist businesses realise the potential possible via the NBN and for digitial growth in their business.

Rollout in the Far North Region

According to the nbn.com.au website the following applies for major townships in our region as far as connection to the NBN:

- Quorn – available end of June 2017 (to the node connection with some out of town areas via fixed wireless)
- Coober Pedy – available now (some to the node connection and some via Sky Muster)

- Port Augusta – some areas are available now, however, some will not be available until early 2018 (to the premises connection)
- Roxby Downs – available now (to the node connection)
- Hawker – available now (via Sky Muster only*)
- Other areas – available now (via Sky Muster only)

*Whilst it is reported on the nbn.com.au website that residents and businesses in Hawker are able to connect to the NBN via Sky Muster this is not the case. No service for NBN is currently available in Hawker. When discussing this issue with nbn co staff they are unable to explain why Sky Muster is not available. It is also important to note that RDAFN, along with The Flinders Ranges Council, is currently lobbying to have the connection mode in Hawker upgraded to Fixed Wireless. Attached as Appendix A is a copy of the letter RDAFN has submitted to nbn co, however, no formal response has been received to this date. RDAFN are also lobbying State Ministers to see support regarding this issue.

Key Issues and Challenges

As a result of RDAFN's extensive history with working with nbn co and with businesses regarding the NBN rollout, the following are some of the key issues and challenges that we believe are pertinent to this Inquiry:

- Misinformation and confusion on the differential between nbn co the wholesaler and who are the retailers/service providers.
- Explaining to residents who don't have fibre to the premises what service is provided and why e.g. fibre to the node, fixed wireless , satellite etc, and who decides who gets what and the process for this decision making.
- What are the real costs associated with connection. There is currently confusion with residents predominantly in the satellite only regions and they believe they were misinformed about the cost of installation.
- No businesses seemed to be aware of the "prepare your business for the NBN" checklist.
- Informing business on how to measure their existing service versus what they will receive/currently receive via the NBN service.
- Ongoing engagement with businesses and residents is required, way beyond the actual commencement date of NBN in locations.
- Earlier communication with locations prior to going live, e.g. some locations are receiving notification that NBN will be going live only 2-3 days before it actually happens. This doesn't give adequate lead in time for them to liaise with providers and connect to the network as soon as possible.
- Service providers need to provide accurate information around the speeds that customers can realistically expect and be cleared on how the plans relate to the data speeds offered.
- Educating businesses should be a priority.

Summary

Overall, RDAFN has built good relationships with nbn co staff regarding the NBN rollout and businesses and residents have reported both positives and negatives in relation to their dealings with nbn co and service providers. NBN uptake in our regions will add to business growth, economic growth, potential new business, upgrading of operating systems, being able to diversify to new technologies which might lead to better business transition planning or succession planning, training and upskilling opportunities, industry growth and most importantly, employment opportunities.

13 February 2017

Tim Saul
Community Affairs Manager – South Australia
NBN Co
Level 2, 31-33 Richmond Road
Keswick   SA   5035

Dear Tim

RE: NATIONAL BROADBAND CONNECTION WITHIN THE FLINDERS RANGES COUNCIL BOUNDARIES

RDA Far North has had involvement with the rollout of the NBN in the Far North SA region since 2013 when we were successful in receiving funding under the NBN Readiness Program to carry out a series of workshops and information sessions in conjunction with NBN staff across the region.

Part of this consultation was meeting with stakeholders such as Councils and discussing requirements and possibilities within the townships under their jurisdiction.

When a meeting was held with The Flinders Ranges Council, proposed NBN connections in Quorn and Hawker were discussed. It was put forward by the Council that fibre optic be rolled out in Quorn and fixed wireless be available in Hawker. At the time these proposals were agreed to by the NBN team.

Rollout has commenced in Quorn and we understand that connections will not be made to the home as first thought rather connections only to the street nodes. This is acceptable as long as this doesn't incur extra costs to the residents. We also understand that fixed wireless will also be available to those residents on the township edges.

It is also our understanding that connection via satellite only is now being proposed for Hawker, in lieu of fixed wireless. Hawker is a thriving township in terms of new business growth and tourism. Half a million tourists per year pass through or stay in Hawker on their visit to the Flinders Ranges. Hawker is the last main service township before heading further north and as such visitors use it as their last chance to contact family or undertake business transactions before they go into areas that have little or no mobile or internet coverage. Therefore, they expect coverage here to be just as good as in the metropolitan or urban areas they come from. Satellite coverage only will not meet these expectations.

We also need to take into account the residents and businesses in Hawker as well. Despite a few recent setbacks, Hawker businesses are now expanding and growing. Through a recent funding pool Hawker businesses are set to receive approximately $1.34m in funding to grow and expand. This is a huge win for the township and with some of the unique attractions planned, more tourists and travellers will stop and spend more time in the township. In addition to this, these new and/or expanded businesses will need to be able to use a reliable internet service.

The region currently lacks high-speed broadband infrastructure, limiting the capacity of local businesses and individuals to interact with the global economy. For businesses in the region, and in this case in Hawker, to remain competitive consideration needs to be given to the provision of fixed wireless in lieu of satellite service for the Hawker township.

The proposed satellite communications systems and coverage in the area will pose many challenges for business operators with the biggest being reliability. Sub-standard telecommunications services are disruptive and costly to a business's trading. A reliable service for business owners is required for the general running of the business and is crucial for businesses regulatory requirements and to keep in contact with, and provide an online service for their customers including financial transactions, online booking systems, social media interactions and responding to enquiries via electronic mail etc.
RDA Far North wholeheartedly supports The Flinders Ranges Council in their request for the planned NBN satellite services at Hawker to be replaced with fixed wireless, to ensure the best outcome for both residents and businesses.

Yours sincerely

Claire Wiseman
Chief Executive Officer