



Australian Government

Department of Broadband,
Communications and the Digital Economy

Corporate Plan 2011-13



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From the Secretary

The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy has an ambitious and challenging agenda over the next three years.

We operate in a dynamic environment where new and converging technologies are delivering faster, more interactive and personalised information and services.

The digital economy—a fast-paced, worldwide and evolving network of technology, business models, employment practices and social experiences—will eventually affect almost all aspects of daily life.

Against this global backdrop, our work significantly shapes Australia's future prosperity and wellbeing, particularly through national broadband infrastructure, digital switchover and the pro-competitive regulatory environment and the policy challenges associated with a fast-developing digital economy.

Our Corporate Plan sets out the directions we plan to take to achieve the outcomes expected by the community and government. Through this, we intend to create a shared understanding of how we will approach our work, our strategic priorities and our future challenges.

We can only achieve our outcomes through the dedication and perseverance of our people. We will continue to invest in developing their skills and capabilities with this in mind.

We will review this plan annually to reflect changes in our external environment or government requirements. Significant changes will result in the publication of an annual update.



Peter Harris

Our purpose

VISION

Helping Australians communicate.

WHAT WE DO

The department's goal is to help develop a vibrant, sustainable and internationally-competitive broadband, broadcasting and communications sector and, through this, promote the digital economy for the benefit of all Australians.

Government's role in developing the digital economy includes laying the foundations for Australia's digital infrastructure, facilitating innovation and setting regulatory frameworks conducive to enabling individuals, households, businesses and the community to take up the associated opportunities.

The department has four broad areas of focus.

- > **Transforming the structure of telecommunications**—enhancing access to digital economy platforms by promoting delivery of fast, affordable and reliable broadband and communications infrastructure across Australia.
- > **Switchover to digital television and enhancing the broadcasting sector**—coordinating the switchover from analog to digital television and enhancing the quality and diversity of the broadcasting sector to deliver content and services consistent with community expectations.
- > **Realising the benefits of the digital economy**—supporting all Australians to safely and securely realise the full innovative potential of the digital economy and ensure reasonably-priced, essential communications services are available to consumers and businesses.
- > **Enabling a good consumer experience**—supporting effective consumer information and research and working with industry to encourage industry-driven solutions to specific consumer issues, including cybersafety and cybersecurity.

Our corporate, finance and legal areas support these activities.



HOW WE WORK

We are committed to the Australian Public Service Values and Code of Conduct. We place a high value on efficiency and effectiveness, being innovative and consultative, recognising the public interest and serving the Australian Government.

We aim to provide a challenging and interesting work environment where people embrace opportunities and engage in their work, supporting the commitment and professionalism of our people.

Our focus will extend across government, exposing what the broadband network can deliver in many public service delivery areas, notably health and education. We also work closely with other agencies with particular interests in communications—including the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Attorney-General's Department—in addition to private sector, peak industry and community stakeholders.

We work closely with five portfolio organisations—the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), Australia Post, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), the Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS), and NBN Co Limited (NBN Co). We respect their independence while creating an environment in which work that anticipates changing community and business needs is readily shared.

The department's governance arrangements underpin our work. These arrangements set the major components of our accountability framework, the context for our corporate planning process, and the importance of meeting our obligations to the Parliament, government, our Minister and stakeholders.

The Australian Government's 2010 blueprint for reform of government administration will inform the way that we improve our processes and performance.



Our strategic priorities

Over the next three years, we will focus on the following four strategic priorities.

TRANSFORMING THE STRUCTURE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Supporting the rollout of and transition to the National Broadband Network

Existing networks cannot support increasing and expected demand for faster, more affordable, broadband services. The Australian Government has established NBN Co Limited to design, build and operate Australia's new high speed National Broadband Network.

A network of approximately 6000 km of optical fibre backbone will be completed in six priority locations in regional Australia in 2012.

The department is working with NBN Co to connect up to 93 per cent of Australian homes, schools and workplaces with fibre-based services, and the remaining seven per cent of premises with next-generation wireless and satellite technologies.

Our priorities are:

- > establishing appropriate regulatory and governance arrangements for NBN Co
- > ensuring NBN Co is resourced and rolling out its network and migrating customers to it
- > informing Australians of the opportunities afforded by using the NBN, starting with Tasmania and trial sites in all Australian states and territories
- > reshaping regulation in the telecommunications sector to deliver outcomes that are in the interests of consumers, business and the economy more broadly
- > reforming the institutional, regulatory and funding framework for the delivery of the government's public policy objectives in the telecommunications sector in a fibre-networked Australia, including through the establishment of USO Co
- > achieving a smooth transition from broadband support through the Australian Broadband Guarantee to NBN standard services, including through the provision of interim NBN services across regional and rural Australia.

Improving regional communications services

Australia is a large country with vast distances between centres of population, and many people live in isolated communities. This creates unique challenges for regional communications services in Australia.

The department is improving communications services for Australians living and working in regional, rural and remote Australia.

400 community phones will be monitored and maintained in remote Indigenous communities in 2010-11.

Our priorities are:

- > managing the Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme and the Indigenous Communications Program
- > contracting for new backbone transmission links by rolling out nearly 6000 km of new fibre-optic cables connecting cities, major regional centres and rural towns under the Regional Backbone Blackspots Program
- > delivering the Digital Regions Initiative together with the states and territories to improve health, education and emergency services in regional Australian communities.

SWITCHOVER TO DIGITAL TELEVISION AND ENHANCING THE BROADCASTING SECTOR

Switching over to digital television

Australia is switching to digital television. By the end of 2013, all free-to-air television broadcasters in Australia will have converted from analog to digital transmission. The department is coordinating the switchover.

All Australians will switch over to digital-only television transmission in Australia by the end of 2013.

Our priorities are:

- > reviewing lessons learnt from the successful first switchover to digital-only television in Mildura/Sunraysia on 30 June 2010
- > driving and coordinating switchover in the next switchover regions with a particular focus on regional Victoria
- > raising public awareness so people are prepared to make the switch
- > providing switchover assistance for eligible households
- > funding a major new 16-channel satellite service to remote viewers and in blackspot areas so all Australians can receive the full suite of digital television channels.

Enhancing broadcasting services

Broadcasting remains one of the most powerful ways of delivering information, entertainment and education.

The department is helping to enhance the quality and diversity of television and radio broadcasting services for all Australians.

Community television broadcasters in all major capital cities commence digital television broadcasting from 2010.

Our priorities are:

- > advising the Australian Government on potential reforms to the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* in the context of new and emerging delivery platforms (including as part of the review of convergent media mentioned on page 8)
- > working with the ABC and SBS to address their needs in a converged media environment
- > supporting community television and radio to deal with digital and social environment challenges.

REALISING THE BENEFITS OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

Developing the digital economy

A successful digital economy is essential for Australia's productivity, global competitiveness and improved social wellbeing. It can help with managing key public policy challenges such as our ageing population, health, education and climate change priorities across the Australian economy.

Our priorities are:

- > promoting measures to help more Australians and Australian businesses to take up online opportunities and increase engagement in a fibre-networked world
- > coordinating efforts across government to recognise and develop the new program and policy investments which capitalise public sector benefits from a fibre-networked world
- > assisting the postal sector to develop a sustainable role in the digital economy
- > supporting world-class research and development via National ICT Australia and through innovative partnerships with selected research institutions.

The Digital Regions Initiative benefits services in regional Australia through the innovative use of broadband applications in the areas of health, education and emergency services.

Reshaping regulation for converging technologies

Convergence allows delivery of different types of content and communications services through common networks and consumption over a variety of platforms and user devices. The rollout and take-up of the National Broadband Network will increase this trend.

Trends relating to convergence—including digital technologies, internet protocol networks and high-bandwidth infrastructure—are driving demands for a reshaping of regulation in the telecommunications and broadcasting sectors in the interests of Australian consumers, businesses and the broader economy. The Australian Government aims to provide a framework for a competitive market and balanced regulatory structure that maximises the benefits of high-speed broadband services.

Our priority in this area is to assist the government in conducting a convergence review that will consider existing regulatory frameworks for broadcasting and online content industries.

Convergence will affect all of our legislative instruments [20 instruments were introduced by the department in 2010].

Making the best use of scarce spectrum

The switch to digital television will free up scarce spectrum, which new communications services such as high-speed wireless broadband can use. In June 2010, the government announced it will release 126 megahertz of broadcasting spectrum as a digital dividend. It aims to auction the digital dividend spectrum in late 2012.

The department will work with the ACMA to realise the digital dividend from the analog television switch-off.

Our priorities are:

- > negotiating the timely end to analog television transmissions by 31 December 2013
- > working with the ACMA, broadcasters and other stakeholders to reorganise ('restack') television channels to free this spectrum for new uses by the end of 2014, and to manage the impact of this on viewers
- > facilitating the process for the possible reissue of 15-year spectrum licences to relevant licence holders.

ENABLING A GOOD CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

Empowering consumers and increasing cybersafety and security

While the internet delivers substantial benefits, it also involves potential dangers including exposure to illegal and prohibited content and risk of electronic attacks and fraud. Consumer confidence is essential for the take-up of new technologies, new services and new applications.

The department empowers consumers by building confidence in the telecommunications sector, increasing awareness and educating the community about cybersafety and cybersecurity.

Our priorities are:

- > supporting effective consumer information and research by providing funding to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
- > ensuring all Australians can access telecommunication and internet services, including those facing the disadvantage of location, disability, age, income or education
- > helping to raise cybersecurity and cybersafety awareness in households, schools and small businesses
- > reviewing the telecommunications regulatory regime to ensure it is efficient and responsive to consumer concerns
- > working with industry to encourage industry-driven solutions to specific consumer issues such as mobile premium services and working with the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and the ACMA on customer service issues.

The downloadable
Cybersafety Help Button
enables consumers to
have easy access to online
cybersafety resources and
helpline numbers.

Our future directions

The department will have to adapt its resourcing for its particularly challenging role amid change in policy, programs and regulation; and will necessarily increase its project management skills. The large reform agendas will be proactively but carefully pursued over the coming three years, while the ongoing work of addressing the digital divide and maintaining standards, access and choice in broadcasting and telecommunications must continue unabated.

The administrative costs of reform projects are often underestimated or accorded little significance. As well, effective design and implementation of reform (in both the private and public sectors) requires the acquisition of skills not generally needed for ongoing departmental program activity.

Through its workforce plan, the department will build on its strengths across diverse fields—from mapping to technology advice. All areas across the department must continue to work collaboratively to support policy development and program implementation relating to our strategic priorities. We need to maximise innovative solutions through focused delivery of resources to key priorities and maintain an informed and practical approach to risk management.

Our future directions are grouped in the following primary areas.

Policy and program capability

We will continue to invest in our policy and program capabilities, providing staff with the opportunity to improve their skills in innovative public policy and program development; and, in support of the government's priorities, promote a clear understanding that the department represents the public interest in policy and program development.

We will create an environment in which staff are supported to further engage in collaborative practices and promote greater innovation, and where risks are accepted and managed rather than avoided.

We will work creatively and collaboratively with portfolio agencies and stakeholders to inform our policy and program development activities and ensure that regulatory and other outcomes are delivered.

The online environment

We will take the lead in the public sector and demonstrate the effective use of interactive Web 2.0 technology for improved communication and engagement, both internally and externally with citizens and stakeholders, about our policy and service development. We will continue to give our staff the opportunity to experiment and develop new opportunities for online engagement.

Service delivery

We will engage more effectively with the community and maintain the very high levels of priority that we accord our partnerships with industry and others in the policy, program, regulatory and service delivery environment.

Streamlining our business

We will continually improve the way we do business and reduce red tape by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of our business systems.



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