

**Backhaul Blackspots Initiative Submission**

**Platinum Connect**

## **Background**

Platinum Connect is a small privately owned Darwin based Internet Service provider based. The joint owners of Platinum Connect operate a small Technology services company in Darwin (Portal Technology) servicing the Northern Territory market with both commercial and government contracts. Platinum Connect began trading in 2006 leveraging off the customers of Portal Technology to form a steady and profitable business.

The initial business plan of Platinum Connect was to utilise wholesale accounts through existing service providers to gain a customer base and then invest in communications infrastructure to complete a private network. The intention was to try and provide a different support model (using 100% local support) to the larger communications organisations.

Within a year Platinum Connect completed the first stage of that business plan but during investigation for further investment and growth the costs and availability of Backhaul services became a major obstacle in further continuation of any plans and the company has effectively been in a holding pattern since.

Platinum Connect currently utilises several wholesale agreements with organisations other than Telstra who all utilise Telstra backhaul services.

## **Priority locations**

Platinum Connect would like to highlight the need of the Northern Territory for additional backhaul services.

Currently the only backhaul provider in the Northern Territory is Telstra. The total dominance of this single provider has led to restrictions in capacity and cost for alternative retail vendors. The small local market and total wholesale dominance of Telstra has led other vendors to abandon any plans to complete network backhaul leaving local and national retail providers without options.

Most providers in the Northern Territory resell a Telstra product, either straight from the source or through a third party wholesaler. This has stifled competition and in the most provided substandard product to retail and commercial customers.

The substandard quality of the communications has led consumers to have dwindling faith in communications. There has not been a major uptake in IP Telephony or conferencing and in general the ICT industry is suffering under a single vendor policy.

The NT Government has had to act radically to undertake its own SkyConnect project to ensure communications are available for schools (and possibly police & health)

[http://www.dbcde.gov.au/communications\\_for\\_business/funding\\_programs\\_and\\_support/clever\\_networks/isd/skyconnect](http://www.dbcde.gov.au/communications_for_business/funding_programs_and_support/clever_networks/isd/skyconnect)

As a result of poor advances in communications travelling to meetings either using ground or air travel is regular and necessary.

To date Telstra has placed a big emphasis on 3G mobile technologies which have poor “real” coverage and suffers from similar backhaul outages from other communications.

### **Possible Routes**

The Northern Territory is a small market so any additional backhaul services will be an advantage, particularly to have this supply through a separate provider to Telstra. Recent events have shown how even the smallest technical error can black out the entire area for hours.

This story is just one of many

<http://www.news.com.au/story/0,27574,25303220-29277,00.html>

If possible routes from Western Australia to Darwin, Darwin to Adelaide (through the centre) and Mount Isa to Darwin

### **Contestable Market**

The Northern Territory is going through a great period of growth particularly in the oil and gas market. The industries of Tourism, Livestock and Mining also continue to show growth and The Top End has also become a defence focal point

Information on the Northern Territory market can be found here

<http://www.chambernt.com.au/index.cfm?fuseaction=page&p=81>

The communications market in the NT is small but crucial to the ongoing ability for this region of Australia to grow commercially. The supply of additional backhaul will also ensure that this area of Australia is not a pocket of poor communications for the education of Territorians

## **Design and Operational Parameters**

### **Type & Capacity**

As outlined previously any additional backhaul will be of great assistance to this region. You may say any additional backhaul is essential. It is not important what other services are or are not provided.

A key requirement in supplying this backhaul is that the organisation that operates it cannot provide both retail and wholesale services to the market. The current arrangement where Telstra have everything is stifling competition and clearly debilitating user services.

### **Location (access)**

If possible any infrastructure should NOT be placed in anything owned by Telstra. Neutral points owned by the Australia Government with clearly defined access to vendors (including Telstra) to ensure access. Within these areas each provider should have controlled access and its own infrastructure