

Senator Conroy
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

Submission on National Broadband Network.

Dear Mr Conroy,

First I would like to thank you for the current emphasis that you are placing on the advancement of Australia's internet superstructure. This country still has a long way to go to really be competitive on the world stage but hopefully with the current governments help, we may start to level the playing field so to speak.

Now on with my submission, I applaud your goal of enabling 12mbs for 98 percent of the population but I would like to think that just getting as many telephone exchanges enabled for basic ADSL as possible should be the greater goal. I would like to use my current circumstance (interpret as a case study so to speak) as an example as to why this should be a higher priority than increasing the speed of the connection at this stage:

Now I have just finished a work posting to the City of Mackay (Central QLD) where for the last three years I have been fortunate to have had access to ADSL. Note the download speeds were 1.5mbs DL and 256kbs UL. Now I found those speeds more than adequate for good internet usage.

My posting has recently finished and I have moved back to a semi rural area in the region of Toorbul (approximately 60 kms north of Brisbane), where unfortunately I cannot obtain ADSL due to the local exchange not being listed by Telstra for enablement. Yet just 6 kms down the road the next phone exchange is enabled on the other side of the Bruce highway. This just leaves either Satellite or wireless internet via the 3G phone network (which unfortunately does not service the area I am in with reliability). Also both of these solutions are priced beyond my families ability to afford at this stage, though wireless is becoming better value.

Now with the current technology of ADSL/ADSL2+ the ranges from exchanges are becoming greater (ten km ranges for basic ADSL is possible)and in a lot of circumstances can service a large part of the population around the more remote telephone exchanges. The townships of Toorbul, Meldale and Donnybrook consist of several thousand people and the majority all reside within the ranges of this telephone exchange. At this stage all of these residents are serviced by basic Dial up internet and would benefit significantly with an upgrade to simple ADSL.

I have found that web services and sites that I took for granted whilst in Mackay are pretty much unusable. I currently subscribe to Telstra's Bigpond service and find that even opening the basic homepage of the website can take anywhere between 5 to 15 minutes, yet on ADSL this page can open in a matter of seconds.

The main reason for this I believe is that most webpages are becoming more complex and data intensive to cope with the role out of broadband in more populated areas/countries. This then puts those of us still on the older dial up systems under greater pressure as we are finding it harder to access the information that we desire. I have even gone as far as telling friends and family to only send emails smaller than 1

mb in size as it takes too long to download and open. Once again this would not be an issue with even the most basic of ADSL connections.

This situation is also going to become worse over the next few years as I have 2 children, one of which is reaching the stage where he can start learning how to use computers and internet. The problem with this is the educational websites that I would like to access for him take far too long to load to be effective. Waiting 30 mins for a short 30 sec video clip can be a nightmare with a three year old with a short attention span. Said 30 sec clip with ADSL will only take seconds to download and be viewed. I do not wish to have my children left behind in the current educational environment due to slow and unreliable internet connections.

I cannot even begin to contemplate using websites like bigpond movies or Apple's iTunes store to purchase downloadable movies/music because it is simply physically impossible to download these types of files over a simple dial up connection.

Now I believe the above issues faced by myself and my fellow residents is not unique. I would guess there are dozens if not hundreds of smaller communities that would benefit significantly by just being able to access basic ADSL. This is, I believe, where the governments focus should be for the next few years. And yes, I do understand that there will be areas where the technology cannot reach but over time these areas will be reduced as technology advances to cover these distances.

I do not believe the priority for enablement of broadband should be linked to population size either, not when the ability of the large telecommunication companies is such that they can enable all the exchanges for this service if desired. Consideration should also be given to the fact that as you move further out from the major CBD's the average income of families drop making the alternatives harder to afford. Thus possible regulation of wireless internet pricing should be considered for those areas unable to be reached by ADSL over landline. I say this because the pricing difference between telco's is unbelievably significant and in most cases extremely expensive.

Internet technology is advancing at an astronomical rate and those of us still left on connections that were adequate 10 years ago are being left behind. Soon it will get to the point where I will disconnect my internet connection as I would rather save the money on the connection and line rental fees.

One form of possible connection not touched on in the above is Broadband over Powerlines, which I believe has been trialled in Tasmania with some success. Although I understand that this form of connection interferes with radio communications in the HF band. This type of connection would benefit all households if this problem with radio interference can be corrected. This form of technology has the potential to reach 100 % of the population with extremely high speeds.

Summary:

- Focus on enabling all exchanges to ADSL before speed increases.

- Consider regulation of pricing for other forms of connection to bring the cost within the budgets of the average family.
- Consider altering legislation to enforce minimum standards of connection reliability and service.
- Further studies and research into Broadband over Power lines.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read my submission and would like to wish you luck in achieving the goal you have set out. If at any stage you would like further information on my submission, please feel free to contact me via the information below or alternatively if you visit the following websites:

www.atomicmpc.com.au

www.whirlpool.com.au

www.pcauthority.com.au

You will find a wealth of opinions which would greatly complement the submissions you require. It will also give you a broader understanding of the communities frustrations in regards to the major Telco's and the services they both provide and withhold.

Thanks
Andrew Bayard