Government Open to Discussion on Broadband

SENATOR STEPHEN CONROY
Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Local Government has a strong understanding of the economic and social benefits of broadband. It understands that better infrastructure and competitive arrangements mean new opportunities to improve efficiency, drive productivity and generate new business and employment for local communities. To this end, Local Government has been overwhelmingly supportive of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

The Government has been working quickly to kick-start this historic nation-building infrastructure project. This has included discussions with key stakeholders, such as the Australian Local Government Association, and we look forward to continued positive and constructive dialogue.

We all recognise the transformative long-term benefits on offer and we should keep that in firm view as we undertake the rollout. It is also worth all of us considering what we can put into this historic project, as well as what we can gain and, as I have said before, I am open to discussions on how that can happen.

The Government is well aware of interest in how the NBN rollout may interact with local planning laws and impact on local environments. We understand the sensitivity and want to work cooperatively and constructively with Local Government on these issues.

There has been some discussion in recent weeks about how the NBN will be deployed. From the outset, the Government wants the NBN rollout - including the Fibre-to-the-Premises component - to be as unobtrusive as possible. It may be that Local Government can assist in this regard by providing access to facilities they might control, such as ducts and rights of way.

We have indicated that, where possible and cost-effective, fibre optic lines can and will be placed underground. In other instances, aerial cabling may be faster and more cost-effective. I know that some local governments have had experience with the rollout of overhead HFC cables by Telstra and Optus in the mid 1990’s. In this context, it is worth noting expert opinion that the NBN will be significantly less obtrusive.

Dr Jonathon Spring, the architect of TasColt fibre rollout in Tasmania says fibre optic is “very attractive” compared to HFC because the wires are much smaller and can be deployed much higher up the poles. “There’s no visual pollution,” he said.

It should also be noted that no decisions have been made about the ratio or location of overhead fibre compared to underground and this will be considered in detailed studies as part of implementation planning.

The Government looks forward to further consultation with stakeholders, including the Australian Local Government Association and individual councils, on this issue and others related to the NBN rollout. This infrastructure is about preparing our local communities for the future. It is enabling infrastructure for the 21st Century digital economy, a platform for improved local service delivery and economic opportunities. It is worth us all keeping this in mind as we work together to deploy this historic nation-building project.

Senator Stephen Conroy

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE: tasbuilthomes.com.au

At Tasbuilt it’s all about you, your lifestyle, your layout, your location...