



MEDIA RELEASE

NBN AWARENESS MUST IMPROVE

(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

Launceston, TAS, 10 March 2011 – Digital Tasmania today called for further efforts on the part of NBNCo and the Federal Government to raise community awareness of the NBN through a variety of means such as mass-market advertising, local information seminars and better community consultation.

Appearing before House Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications' inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network today in Launceston, spokesperson Andrew Connor said that awareness and information is key to consumer acceptance of the NBN.

“Many in the Tasmanian community have heard of the NBN, but they know few other details. Even those who seek more details are often left confused over how they will connect to the NBN in terms of Fibre or Wireless; and how to compare their current broadband plan with those the NBN will offer.” said Mr Connor.

“At the end of the day, people want a straight answer. We acknowledge that circumstances may change as the rollout progresses, but more clarity in the rollout timeframe is key in helping consumers decide whether they should be committing to things like 24-month broadband contracts with an ISP.”

To this point in time, awareness of the NBN outside of the first three towns (Scottsdale, Smithton and Midway Point) has been poor.

“NBN and ‘optic fibre’ is mentioned by government at every opportunity but explaining it has not been a priority. Many people who speak to us express frustration that the State government is squandering its much-touted ‘NBN Advantage’.”

“This is not helped by proposed cuts to ICT in the recent Tasmanian Government mid-year financial review. Programs such as Connected Classrooms, a Digital Pavilion Experience Centre and the extension of the Wireless Waterfront Initiative face the axe.”

“We fully support the NBN project and accept that it's a massive undertaking, but we are calling on the State and Federal Governments, NBNCo and the Retail Service Providers to make more information available to consumers so that they can have a better understanding of what the NBN can do for them.”

Details that are required by consumers include:

- An indication as to whether they will get wireless, satellite or fibre?
- Whether individuals or communities make a contribution to go from wireless or satellite to fibre?
- Whether there a plan to progressively upgrade communities on wireless to fibre in the future?

The East Tamar communities of Hillwood, Dilston and Windemere for example, have a combined footprint of around 750 premises. They are in the situation of being close to a major city getting NBN fibre to the premises, they have fibre backbones to existing exchanges, but are being told they'll get wireless and potentially lose ADSL 1 & 2 services. For some with ADSL2 this is seen as a step backwards, for others they are missing out on the opportunity to leap ahead to fibre speeds and services running at 100-1000mbit.

Additionally, Digital Tasmania and residents are eager to know when construction of the NBN in the next 7 towns in Stage 2 will commence. Announced in October 2009, construction was originally scheduled for December 2010.

About Digital Tasmania:

Digital Tasmania is a consumer action group, created to give a voice to the views and needs of Tasmanian consumers in the digital age.

For further comment or to schedule an interview, contact Digital Tasmania on 0432 870 881, or email media@digitaltasmania.org