



## MEDIA RELEASE

# MR BARTLETT, PLEASE GET US CONNECTED

(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

**Launceston, TAS, 11 June 2008** – Digital Tasmania today called for Premier Bartlett to work closely with the Treasurer, Aurora and CitySpring to help resolve the impasse surrounding the Basslink fibre optic cable.

Speaking at a communications forum in Launceston today convened by Senator Guy Barnett and attended by Federal Shadow Minister for Broadband, Bruce Billson, Digital Tasmania spokesperson Andrew Connor reiterated the need for the state government to resolve the uncertainty around Basslink.

“Since the Basslink connector was activated, Tasmanians have paid approximately \$4.3 million dollars, that’s \$5500 a day in fees paid to CitySpring. That’ll be over 30 million dollars by the end of the agreement in 2021.”

“Premier David Bartlett has been giving us his catchphrase of Clever, Kind and Connected ever since he’s been promoted to the job.”

“This morning Mr Bartlett said in the Examiner that working on solutions together in a cooperative and collaborative way was going to be a hallmark of his government. In the spirit of this, we call on the premier to work closely with the Treasurer, Aurora and CitySpring, to bring together all of their assets for the greater good of all Tasmanians.”

“We believe that Mr Bartlett, given his background and education, knows the importance of broadband infrastructure, he just needs to get it over the last hurdle so that all these assets and our five and a half thousand dollars a day aren’t going to waste.”

Digital Tasmania also called for the Rudd Labor government to give serious consideration to making another independently operated Bass Strait fibre optic cable part of the Federal government’s National Broadband Network (NBN) strategy.

“Tasmania needs to be the first in line to receive the benefits of the NBN rollout, due to our comparative disadvantage to the rest of the country. A key element to reversing this disadvantage, particularly to businesses in the state, is the provision of another fibre optic cable to provide a redundant alternative path in the event of a Basslink failure.”

Mr Connor said another Bass Strait cable was also crucial for a solid and truly competitive environment as it would help to avoid a duopoly from emerging, but Basslink was currently preventing this investment from occurring.

“No operator will put the money up for another cable while Basslink remains in an unknown state.”

Mr Connor also supported calls from other forum participants to work to improve the utilisation of broadband services across the state.

“Once this infrastructure is commercialised, we must ensure that we, as a state, take full advantage to really recoup what has been a significant investment.”

“We’ve seen Tasmania can lead the country in the take-up of technologies such as digital television, where there is a clear benefit available. For digital TV, this was the fifth free-to-air channel only available on digital TV. We must find a similar incentive for Tasmanians to catch up and even overtake the nation in terms of broadband usage.”

“The Tasmanian government and our local ICT industry must work closely together to ensure that all Tasmanians, be they consumers, small businesses or large enterprises, take full advantage and are aware of the benefits that arise from access to high speed broadband technology.”

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. More information including its submission to the Senate Committee can be found on the group's website, <http://www.digitaltasmania.org>

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*For further comment or to schedule an interview, contact Digital Tasmania on 0432 870 881, or email [media@digitaltasmania.org](mailto:media@digitaltasmania.org)*