25 March 2018

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Inquiry into the rollout of the NBN in rural and regional areas
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Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
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Dear Sir/Madam,
This submission is in reference to part e) Other related matters of the terms of reference for this inquiry. Specifically the uncertainty of connection availability status, poor information and an NBN policy of appearing to connect the greatest number, instead of connecting those with genuinely poor internet.

The NBN rollout has been extremely problematic for many rural residents who already suffer the disadvantage of distance from many services and are much more reliant on the internet to do the most basic of tasks such as education, work, shopping & banking. In my view, the internet is now an essential required basic utility and it's availability should be treated accordingly.

Delays in the rollout have increased this rural inequity & disadvantage, as many city residents have alternative options of reliable internet via mobile 4G networks from multiple price competitive providers (Telstra, Vodafone & Optus) as well as alternative wireless providers (VIVID etc). Many city residents have experienced only modest improvements in speed once connected to the NBN as they were already on relatively fast ADSL2+ connections (10+ Mbps).

Indeed in my own region of the NSW Southern Highlands, we have the limited option of a local Bowral ISP ACENET who offer limited fixed wireless to work around previous unavailability of ADSL services in newer subdivisions and rural properties. However, this is a private company and unfortunately due to the location of their towers, we are unable to receive this service, for if we had we would have already migrated to this provider.

My story is one of poor internet for over a decade. We have lived in the same street for 12 years at two premises. In both cases we have had ADSL2+ with typical speeds of 2.5 / 0.3 Mbps, or barely 1/10th of the NBN minimum standard for download. However, the upload rate is an enormous problem. It typically takes approximately 1 minute to upload a photo, and this causes the internet to be blocked for all users in the house. Recently, it took 4 days to backup 700 photos in batches of 10 or so. Routine Operating System software updates are an overnight job for each machine. Quite frankly this is a national embarrassment.

Our experience of the NBN thus far has been one of joy followed by bitter disappointment. I had been on a waiting list since April 2016 with our ISP (Telstra) and was contacted in June 2016 just after our area went Ready For Service (RFS) that we could connect to the NBN.

Shortly after, we received by mail a connection kit directly from NBN. I ordered the connection and heard nothing for two weeks. I then contacted the ISP and placed a second order. This also failed. Upon further inquiry it was revealed that NBN was actually unavailable without any estimate for a connection date. Subsequently we were informed that an error had been made in listing our premise as being NBN RFS.

Our disappointment is palpable. Initially we believed that our decade of poor connection would be alleviated after watching the rollout in many areas already relatively well served as a priority.

Actually getting any information about our future from NBN has been near impossible. In February 2018 I was informed by telephone that we would be connected by March 17th, 2018 on FTTN. We then received a letter saying that conventional services would be cut off by 10th August 2018. However, in subsequent email communications, it was hoped that we would be connected by August 2018, and if we weren't, we would not be cut off.

The NBN address checker simply provides information for our address that additional works are necessary, without any indication of the technology or even an estimated date.

In summary, we have been waiting for more than a decade for an internet connection to meet basic utility standard. We have been offered a connection in error and we have had almost no information as to when we are actually likely to be connected.