



Mr Ray Smith
General Manager
Bland Shire Council
PO Box 21
WEST WYALONG NSW 2671

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RTIRC Secretariat
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Secretariat

Thank you for giving Bland Shire Council the opportunity to submit a brief response to the Regional Telecommunications Review.

High Speed Broadband (HSB) would play a key role in building competitive advantage in the Regional Australian economy including the Riverina NSW and the Bland Shire. It is increasingly becoming a fundamental tool to improve the productive capacity of, and innovation in, Regional Australian businesses. HSB would drive electronic business practices by creating new ways of doing business, enabling efficiencies in corporate and manufacturing systems, and generating new products and services.

By utilising HSB smartly, Regional companies would be better able to move from a product focus to a customer focus, develop closer online relationships, engage in web-based ordering and adopt advanced communications systems.

The manufacturing sector in particular is dependent on the potential of HSB to increase its participation in globalised markets and value chains. New knowledge can be brought to the key functions of design, production and distribution through e-business. HSB can underlie all levels of the manufacturing production process: research & development; design & engineering; purchasing & logistics; operations; marketing; sales & order management; post sale service; and product content & design.

While businesses in Regional Australia have some form of broadband access, without HSB, firms are limited in their ability to take advantage of rapidly advancing new communication/electronic social media business tools and next generation applications that could provide them with increased efficiencies, or potential new products and services.

The uptake of HSB in Regional Australia is related to a number of factors such as: access, affordability; reliability; lack of awareness of capabilities/perceived benefits; company skills and expertise; or low understanding of new technologies and packages.

Businesses in particular currently face cost barriers in their ability to load remotely hosted applications onto their local area connections in Regional Australia. Regional and rural businesses face other barriers such as speed, reliability and capacity to transact/communicate online.

Businesses in Regional Australia are using the internet for a wide variety of business activities including financial transactions, exchange data, manage supply chains and marketing etc.

Social Networking such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Yammer, Applications and Facebook are becoming more important for business to business communications on mobile technologies. Businesses now want to add Facebook Pages with shopping carts to improve competitiveness.

Regional Australian Businesses would benefit from HSB for streaming content, file sharing and being able to access and make use of online cloud storage services etc.

Online cloud storage facilities could prove invaluable for Regional Businesses for those that have important files and data on their system and would like to be able to access this from other Internet enabled devices and other locations. For Regional Business users this facility can provide a huge amount of ease and convenience and even casual users can benefit from the service if they have data that they sometimes need to access from another location and device.

Regional Businesses will not have to worry about carrying data and discs around with them if you are able to easily retrieve your required data from 'the cloud' and this is ideal for business people that are on the move. Businesses will be able to access your data from the range of internet devices such as smart phones, laptops, and Internet tablets, or from another computer in a different location should they wish to.

Increased cross-border trade in IT services and what is called IT-enabled services (ITES). Some estimates for the IT services and ITES market put it between \$US475 billion and \$US700-800 billion, (source: World Bank).

Energy, transport and emissions reductions, as Regional Australia progresses towards a more digitized economy, conducting more and more business online the nature of business and employment changes dramatically.

Grow Regional Centres as the State and Federal Governments has long promoted Regional Centres of Excellence to stop the migration to our crowded capital cities. A high speed broadband network surely is crucial to such a plan.

Economic growth according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics report that income derived over the Internet soared by 52 per cent in the 2008-09 financial year to reach \$123 billion (up \$42 billion) as an additional 25,000 businesses began to receive orders over the Internet and the take up of broadband rose. But this is only the tip of the economic iceberg and greater growth is possible because only 27 per cent of all businesses use the Internet to generate business currently.

Be internationally competitive, by investing in the HSB in Regional Australia will enhance Australia's International competitiveness, but Regional Australia.

With the roll out of HSB to all Education sectors and facilities will allow for greater capacity and more immersive online interactions, resulting in higher quality outcomes for students. HSB will extend access to online learning resources to the home and the facilities to offer students, who cannot access specialist classes via traditional means, the opportunity for online virtual classes.

Australia's Regional health system is facing increased pressure due to our ageing population, increased rates of chronic disease and health workforce challenges. HSB will enable medical

consultations on line and health and allied health providers will be able to diagnose, monitor and provide ongoing care to patients remotely.

The Bland Shire Council is about to embark on a project that will lower the barriers and to raise the visibility for business, agriculture, tourism and the community in the Bland Shire (West Wyalong area) with social media.

The Federal Government must fast track the roll out of the National Broadband Network (NBN) in Regional NSW including the Riverina and the Bland Shire. This will create business opportunities, improve the sustainability and viability of established businesses and improve efficiencies. With the increasing use of mobile technologies, current businesses are being hindered by the slow internet speeds, lack of coverage of the wireless internet and mobile phones in Regional Australia, the Riverina and the Bland Shire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ray Smith', written over a horizontal line.

Ray Smith
General Manager