



Regional Telecommunications Review of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee

To Whom it May Concern
Dear Ms or Sir

Cape York Digital Network Pty Ltd (*cydn*) has read the Issues paper 2011-12 of the Regional Telecommunications Review of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) from the Department of Broadcasting, Communications and the Digital Economy and takes the opportunity to make submission .

Cydn has been in operation in Far North Queensland, and particularly in the remote areas of Cape York for 13 years. Cydn provides ICT for remote and Indigenous Australians through an extended IP network from its network operation centre (NOC) and data warehouse in Cairns, Queensland.

Cydn services provision includes: videoconferencing, email, digital delivery of financial services by citrix, web hosting, remote wireless access and at times involvement in ICT consumer issues. For a full listing of services please see our website www.cydn.com.au

Cape York Digital Network Pty Ltd has been accredited as a signatory to the Government Information Technology Contracting (GITC) Framework – version 5 in the State of Queensland as Q-4158.

Finally, cydn actively contributes to the public discussion by submission to Departmental Government Discussions papers including: *“Universal Service Obligation Legislative Reform for transition to the National Broadband Network discussion paper”*; and Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy *Discussion paper Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman scheme*.

For the purposes our response to the Issues paper 2011-12 of the Regional Telecommunications Review of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) we have made comment to those questions based on our experiences.

Our submission responses are based on over a decade of experience and providing ICT services at a number of levels for and into remote Australia.

We thank the Committee for its time in considering our submission and the opportunity to make submission.

Yours Truly

Philip Dutchak
Managing Director
cydn Pty Ltd
242 Sheridan Street, Cairns Queensland 4870

1. **The digital economy**

Question 1. How is the use of telecommunications services; and information and communication technology (ICT) evolving in different industry sectors and what is the impact of these changes in regional Australia?

Question 2. What is needed to extend and accelerate the role of telecommunications services and ICT in delivering benefits to regional economies?

cydn set up Internet community centres throughout Cape York in the major Cape communities in co-operation with the communities. Staffed by cydn community officers to assist users, these public internet sites have allowed Indigenous community members in particular, to take part in the online world. In effect, cydn centres have been “demand generators” for the online, digital world of computers, digital delivery of services and web browsing. The argument that increased access to wireless data services (Telstra NextG) has now filled the community's need for online access is not supported by our data of users

In the small community of Umagico at the tip of Cape York, the cydn centre with six computers is in constant use. This is noteworthy as a commercial internet cafe is also in operation in the nearby community of Seisa. Users are going online to check the weather, do a tax return, for online learning, to email friends, to “Google” a subject or children get the experience of working with computers in a clean and safe environment protected from the “dark” side of the web by cydn enterprise security firewalls and web filters.

Our points here are:

- Over ten years what people access online has increased as the services available over the web (or the web generally) has changed. But remote Australia suffers from a lack of bandwidth available for web applications and digital services as these increase in complexity and demand larger bandwidth
- In our view, simply providing a network connection (or even a larger bandwidth network connection) to provide access to the digital world is NOT enough, the services provided must go down to the desktop and then these need to be supported.
- Cydn has always used terrestrial telecommunications links. It has never used satellite except for satellite phones and an isolated client where the only telecommunications option available was satellite but, where eventually, the client set up an additional office where terrestrial carrier links were available due to the lack of reliability and functionality of satellite service at the first site.
- Cydn does acknowledge and at times, does use wireless. (and almost always with external antenna) And we further acknowledge the increased availability of wireless carrier services (Telstra NextG) in the Cape as an improvement over the last decade. But our preferred option is always terrestrial telecommunications links. We are also anxious as to the NBN wireless service when Telstra keep announcing speed increases (notably 4G) to their wireless services
- We are therefore increasingly anxious as to the National Broadband Network (NBN) for Cape York, where according to information released, NBN in the Cape will mean only satellite and wireless and we have no detail as to how much or where will be wireless and how much will be satellite.

- We have further concerns over the OPERATIONS of the NBN working in remote Australia. Cape York like most of northern Australia is not only remote but is a harsh environment subject to equally harsh climate conditions of cyclones and monsoonal rains, with long periods of extreme cloud cover.
- Power to site remains a key consideration for all cydn sites and users. The Cape communities are largely NOT on a power grid by a major supplier. Communities receive power from site diesel generators with fluctuations in terms of output wattage power. Cydn has had to spend considerable time and resources at its site for to ensure reliable power with networked UPSs and backup systems
- In our view and at this point, NBN has no clear plan for remote Australia and while we are confident NBN will come up with a well-engineered solution, we are anxious that it will simply stop at a network boundary and possibly offer an inferior service on a number of levels to what cydn has now developed and deployed over years.
- **We therefore recommend NBN work with cydn to develop and advance a solution at least for Cape York.**

Business efficiencies and opportunities

Question 3.

The committee would like to hear from businesses and organisations about their participation in, experiences of, and expectations about, the digital economy. Examples could relate to specific sectors such as agriculture, mining, manufacturing or retail; business-to-business activities; productivity; teleworking; and the development of new knowledge-based industries.

Our points here are:

- Cydn under contract provides customised ICT solutions for a range of commercial business in Far North Queensland
- A key business advantage of cydn is that it is local regional provider with a real, on-the-ground presence (office) and staff in remote locations. We would like to strongly emphasise this point to the Review that even with business becoming more “virtual” or “digital” there still needs to be a person and office to facilitate business in remote Australia
- Cydn provides remote ICT services to tourists and visitors to Cape York
- Cydn provides real jobs in remote Cape York communities for Indigenous people

Delivery of government services and programs

Question 4. The NBN will help the range of online government services to continue to expand. The committee is interested in views and experiences about engaging with government services online, whether local, state or federal.

Question 5. What are some examples of what you want to see happen to encourage greater participation in the digital economy by people living and working in regional Australia?

Our points here are:

- Cydn currently provides ICT services for a number of State and Federal clients
- Queensland State Government ICT providers in Brisbane have highlighted the significant advantage to Queensland Government Departments of cydn as a local, and proven company with significant and accredited ICT assets and services with skilled technical staff available in Cairns and the Cape for local their Department offices.

3. Communications needs of Indigenous people and communities

Question 9: Are there examples of the internet being used by Indigenous Australians in ways that take advantage of economic, social or cultural opportunities?

Question 10. What further initiatives should the committee consider to improve awareness within Indigenous communities of the opportunities provided by improved broadband services?

Question 11: What recommendations do you have for remote communities to take advantage of the progressive increase in availability of high-speed broadband?

Question 12: What more could be done to improve digital literacy amongst Indigenous Australians and within Indigenous communities?

Our points here are:

- After 13 years in operation, we would suggest that cydn is the ICT model for remote and Indigenous Australians. After 13 years of operations, cydn is NOT a "trial" or developing project. Cydn is mature operation and business. As a not for profit company committed to relieving social disadvantage by improved ICT services and products. The issues, problems, challenges of building and running and providing services in remote Cape York have seen cydn develop corresponding solutions, systems, training, staff and JOBS. Cydn is well suited to meet the ICT challenges and opportunities of remote Australia and particular Indigenous people and communities
- Cydn facilitates and SUPPORTS ICT user participation and systems at the community and regional level; and it operates as a business in the public and private sectors. We would suggest it is a total and sustainable solution
- Further, cydn is a regional model which has the flexibility to adapt itself to different regions and communities and yet can work on a national level.

- Cydn's is "metropolitan services for the bush"
- Whatever our current concerns to NBN are, (and ironically, that is that the promise of NBN may actually be much less as a reality and increase customer issues) cydn must work to take advantage of the NBN. Therefore cydn has offered to work with NBN in developing systems and solutions so all Australians can join in the digital world and AT ALL LEVELS.
- The notion of NBN "build it and they will come" is simply not detailed enough to work at a practical level in remote Australia.

5. Consumer issues

Question 16. Are there any significant consumer issues specific to rural and remote communities that you consider are not being addressed?

Question 17. Do people in regional areas, particularly those in vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, have appropriate access to information about their consumer rights and the service options available to them?

Question 18. If not, what additional strategies could be put in place to assist individuals and groups to better understand their consumer rights and responsibilities?

Our points here are:

- Cydn (as a total solution provider) is increasing having to involve itself with consumer issues and we have commented extensively on this in our submissions "*Universal Service Obligation Legislative Reform for transition to the National Broadband Network discussion paper*"; and Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy *Discussion paper Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman scheme*.
- We remain concerned as to proposed changes to the USO particularly for Indigenous Australians
- We remain concerned as to increasing complexity of telecommunications offers (especially mobile phones and smart phones) with associated "extras" included in "package deals" and the possible targeting of Indigenous people by aggressive sales people particularly by phone for a "quick or easy" sale.
- Cydn remains concerned in the trend of social media and the digital tracking (or recording) of users details by social websites particularly of Indigenous children
- Cydn makes every technical effort to filter and screen or simply block the "darker" side of the worldwide web AND uses system filters to block spam emails that promises money or misrepresent themselves as from a recognised bank or financial institution. Plus, cydn actively advises its users of current online threats and scams