

ISSUE PAPER 2011-2012 REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

SUBMISSION FROM THE MEMBERS OF THE GLADSTONE REGION ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (GREP)

Gladstone Economic and Industry Development Board

Gladstone Area Promotion and Development Limited

Gladstone Regional Council

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

Gladstone Industry Leaders Group

Gladstone Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Gladstone Engineering Alliance

AgForce (Calliope Branch)

Key Areas	Gladstone Region Response
<p>1. THE DIGITAL ECONOMY</p>	<p>A rebound in economic growth is under way in Queensland, dominated by more than \$75 billion worth of engineering construction work. Deloitte Access Economics Business Outlook for the September Quarter found Queensland's engineering construction had seen a "stunning surge" with more than \$38 billion worth of projects now under way and a further \$37.5 billion in the pipeline.</p> <p>Major projects currently under way in the Gladstone region include the \$16.2 billion Gladstone LNG project; the \$15 billion Queensland Curtis LNG project; and the \$20 billion Australia Pacific LNG project all currently under construction with processing facilities being established on Curtis Island and due for commissioning by late 2015. In addition the \$1.9 billion second stage of the Rio Tinto Alcan Yarwun alumina refinery is due for commissioning in 2012; and the recent \$2.5 billion financial close and construction commencement for Stage 1 of the Wiggins Island Coal Export Terminal (WICET) is due for commissioning in 2014 with a second stage of the same scale to follow directly.</p> <p>Future projects include another \$20 billion investment expected in 2013 for the Arrow Energy LNG project; and \$1.8 billion for the TRUenergy Aldoga Power Station; together with the possible investments of some \$2.5 billion each for the Gladstone Steel Plant Project (Boulder Steel) and the proposed Gladstone Pacific Nickel refinery.</p> <p>The future for Queensland and Gladstone is truly outstanding however the industrial and infrastructure projects that have commenced or are about to commence in the Gladstone region have posed a number of problems for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who wish to become part of the supply chain to the projects. One of the most obvious of these problems is the attraction and retention of skilled staff. A strategy that is being</p>

	<p>adopted by some of the more innovative SMEs is the use of technology and in particular ICT. Examples of use of ICT and telecommunications services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field staff using portable scanners to scan items to be repaired or manufactured and transmitting the scan back to the workshop. • The transmission of drawings and specifications from a Gladstone SME to another branch or partner in a region that is not experiencing the work pressures in the Gladstone region. • The increased use of teleworking where employees support the Gladstone operations of a business but live and work remotely from Gladstone. Thereby avoiding the higher cost of accommodation caused by pressure from multiple concurrent project construction in the region. <p>One of the main barriers for these innovative businesses maximising the benefits of their initiatives is the quality of existing telecommunication services.</p> <p>Gladstone is poorly served by broadband services. This disincentive has reduced the effectiveness of Gladstone employer's efforts to attract highly skilled workers and their families from CBD areas, where these services are taken for granted. The earliest installation of the NBN in Gladstone will maintain the level of digital access expected by these relocating highly skilled employees to assist them maintain their connections with their extended families, friends and metropolitan services. This early installation will expedite Gladstone's current skill shortages and bolster major project construction in the region.</p>
<p>2. REGIONAL HEALTH AND EDUCATION OUTCOMES</p>	<p>Health</p> <p>The delivery model for health provision is broadening to encapsulate peripheral services at not only hospitals and health centres but also schools, mobile facilities (breast screening is a classic example) and other government centres. It is imperative that a uniform, high performance connection between these facilities is established with wireless, fibre, copper singularly or combinations of these mediums. This facilitates real time patient information analysis and best practice support. The tyranny of regional distances between medical expertise and patient needs is diminished.</p> <p>Queensland Health (QH) has the largest Videoconference system in the world and this business unit constantly wins awards for excellence. There is no doubt that the high utilisation of this service is a cornerstone to significant improvements in information collaboration and outcomes across medical, clinical and commercial activities of the organisation.</p>

	<p>A program to consolidate remote regions into key access points for services should be implemented. QH can't be all things to all locations but consolidation to a sub set of service delivery points would make a great deal of sense and improve services for a great many isolated communities.</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Student engagement when using web 2.0 tools and Education Queensland (EQ) online learning environments would be enhanced with high speed connectivity. Some examples of current poor performance/connectivity are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently an entire class cannot log on to the same website at the same time without lots of delays. Students become frustrated with delayed page loading time and often disconnect from the site. These problems may be overcome with improved bandwidth. • Schools and teachers would benefit from online Professional development, reducing costs for travel and time away from schools. Connectivity can affect the quality of online interaction for teachers and students. • The EQ web conferencing tool includes the option of running web cams, playing video and sharing applications for participants. However, this is generally not used by schools as the connectivity is often too poor to run the applications. Participants can experience delays, drop outs and poor interaction and therefore full use of web conferencing tools is not used. • Students in remote schools participate in LOTE (Japanese) lessons via web conferencing. This saves considerable travel time and allows the students to receive exposure to a subject area with limited teachers. Connectivity can limit the number of students that are able to interact online. Connections that 'drop out' are interruptive to student learning. <p>At the moment schools can choose to upgrade their bandwidth at the following yearly increments: http://education.qld.gov.au/smartclassrooms/strategy/webandinternetaccessservice.html</p> <p>This can be quite expensive and many schools choose not to upgrade their connections.</p>
<p>3 COMMUNICATIONS NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES</p>	<p>There is a Murri Centre under consideration for Gladstone. The proposal brings together current disparate services delivery for the indigenous community.</p> <p>The proposed centre would benefit from broadband access and delivery to assist and support the indigenous population and the development of indigenous business and a proposed business advisory service.</p>

<p>4 DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TERRESTRIAL AND SATELLITE MOBILE PHONE SECTOR</p>	<p>Telstra advise regarding issues with the construction of proposed towers in the Gladstone region LGA that would improve mobile coverage. Some of this infrastrucure cannot be implemented by Telstra who will not indemnify Gladstone Regional Council as per their request.</p> <p>Telstra are currently improving local service with the introduction of a number of <i>Top Hat</i> systems in the region. This new equipment means will deliver ADSL2+ fixed broadband to all homes and businesses that are connected to an upgraded street side cabinet.</p> <p>Satellite reception is inconsistent – many online programs would run more efficiently with a high speed broadband connection. Some schools are not able to access cable or fibre internet connection and are therefore not interacting with eLearning environments to the extent that they wish.</p>
<p>5 CONSUMER ISSUES</p>	<p>Blackspots have been identified throughout the region from suburbs like Seaview which are five minutes from the centre of town through to Agnes Water which affect mobile phone coverage.</p> <p>Access to Education online is severely limited in the Gladstone region due to lack of new infrastructure available to keep up with the population growth as a result students have limited access to ADSL.</p>

Submitted to RTIRC Secretariat via email secretariat@rtirc.gov.au on behalf of the GREP members listed above by:

Dr Ken King FAIM
 Chief Executive Officer
 Gladstone Economic and Industry Development Board
 L3 72 Goondoon Street
 PO Box 5293 Gladstone
 Queensland 4680 Australia
 T: +617 49712318
 F: +617 49712316