

**Internet  
Australia**



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Internet Australia issues a revised NBN policy; calls for a strategic rethink and an end to copper**

Internet Australia, the peak body representing Internet users, is calling for a rethink and urging the Government and the Opposition to put politics aside and agree on a bipartisan NBN strategy. Our call is based on the availability of new, lower cost, optical fibre and backed by a survey of our members that found 80 percent were dissatisfied with the current mixed-technology method (MTM).

There is currently a rising level of debate about the NBN. This is no doubt partly due to the impending election. It also follows ongoing claims of slowed deployments, installation problems and switchover issues.

Making the call for a bipartisan NBN rethink, CEO Laurie Patton observed: "In 2007 a government was elected that undertook to build a modern broadband network delivering cable all the way to more than 90 percent of the nation's premises. A subsequent government adopted a different strategy, using existing copper phone lines, in the expectation that this would deliver the network to more homes sooner and at less expense upfront. Putting aside the relative merits of each strategy, and the success or otherwise of their respective implementations, it is fair to say that time has provided the opportunity for a reassessment of how we build the most appropriate broadband network fit for the 21st Century. New technology has provided a viable alternative to the copper-based fibre to the node (FTTN) model".

A recent hearing of the Senate NBN Select Committee was shown so-called "skinny fibre" that NBN is now using. This was not available when the decision was made to adopt FTTN, which underpins the MTM.

As was predicted by many qualified observers, the overall costs of construction have come down as NBN has refined its operating practices and achieved economies of scale, irrespective of the technology chosen.

"At the same time as we've seen the technology change Internet speeds delivered to consumers in other countries have been steadily rising and causing Australia to fall behind quite dramatically", Mr Patton noted. "We have slipped to 60th on global rankings from 30th just a few years ago, according to the widely-quoted 'State of the Internet' report from content delivery network Akamai. This slide relative to our peers will continue even as the NBN is being built so long as we rely on an ageing copper network".

Internet Australia is keen to see FTTN abandoned in favour of "fibre to the driveway" (technically known as fibre to the distribution point, or FTTdp). This would see fibre cabling run all the way to a

point at or near the boundary to homes and commercial buildings. From there, existing copper could, if necessary, still be used in the short-term. Alternatively, copper wires could be replaced, at any time now or in the future, with fibre into the building. Such an approach would provide a future-proofed network and avoid the need for a costly re-build in 10 to 15 years' time when copper is simply no longer fit-for-purpose.

"While supporting FTTdp as an interim step we remain of the view that a full-fibre (FTTP) network must be the ultimate goal. Anything less than FTTP is an inferior solution", Mr Patton stated.

"Both the Government and the Opposition have highlighted the need for Australia to become an innovation nation. To do this will require high speed Internet connectivity on par with countries in our region also seeking to be innovation hubs. One of our biggest regional competitors, Singapore, already provides consumers with Internet access at speeds 100 times faster than ours. New Zealand is in front of us in a number of rankings and is well ahead in its overall broadband rollout", Mr Patton added. "Now some commentators will say that it is easier to build a broadband network in smaller territories like Singapore and New Zealand. However, we didn't use this as an excuse not to build roads and railways across the country, or to not provide telephones to people living in regional and remote areas".

As the peak body representing Internet users, Internet Australia is well placed to provide independent comment and technical advice on NBN matters. "We were among a select group of expert organisations and individuals invited to appear before the Senate NBN committee last month. Our aim is to promote informed debate on both the immediate and long-term benefits of a broadband-enabled society", Mr Patton said.

The board of Internet Australia last week ratified the following policy new NBN policy statement.

"The Internet is for all Australians. It is an essential service in the 21st century that will underpin Australia's social and economic progress. That means all Australians must have reliable, affordable access to a high quality, high bandwidth broadband service for both upstream and downstream traffic wherever they live and work. The Australian Government, therefore, must ensure provision of the best possible national broadband network, using the most technologically advanced means of delivery available from time to time, and delivering services comparable with world's best practice".

Accordingly, Internet Australia is calling on the Government and the Opposition to work together and to agree on an NBN strategy that meets the objectives expressed above and takes into consideration the technological and cost advances that have transpired since each determined their current broadband policies. "We argue that they should look at our long-term needs, not on the constraints of a short term budget cycle. We ask that they do this in the national interest", Mr Patton concluded.

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"Helping Shape Our Internet Future"

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**About Internet Australia**

Internet Australia is the not-for-profit peak organisation representing everyone who uses the Internet. Our mission – “Helping Shape Our Internet Future” – is to promote Internet developments for the benefit of the whole community, including business, educational, government and private Internet users. We are a broad member-based organisation not an industry lobby group. Our directors and members hold significant roles in Internet-related organisations and enable us to provide high level policy and technical information to Internet user groups, governments and regulatory authorities. Through our participation as the Australian chapter of the global Internet Society we contribute to the development of international Internet regulations and policies.