

Why Fibre to the Premises is not “Nation Building”

Please use the glossary at the end of this document to help understand the jargon.

The great nation of Australia will rise to glory, powered by cutting edge communication technology delivering speeds which put us ahead of the rest of the world. Unfortunately there are several reasons why such a vision is incorrect of the current NBN plan, more communication bandwidth does not equal better productivity, communication does not support primary and secondary industries and there are more important projects better suited for “Nation Building”.

When the internet first dawned, we were using dial-up connections. Browsing the web was bearable as most websites were mostly text with the occasional image. As faster internet connections became more popular, more content has been available such as MP3s and basic video. People have embraced instant messaging and VoIP as cheaper forms of communication. Now we are promised that rolling out connections of 100Mbps will position Australia for future growth and prosperity. When you consider the small amount of bandwidth required for all productive applications - emails, instant messaging, web browsing, EDI, VoIP, etc.. you're only left with one rather unproductive application, High Definition Video on Demand, which requires at least 25Mbps of bandwidth. Even today's video websites such as YouTube are easily accessible and require little bandwidth, yet can contain instructional content. Now HD VoD is peddled as an important application which we need, but how does watching any episode of the Simpsons on demand build a Nation? The government is trying to justify spending \$43bn on a Fibre to the Premises network by calling it “Nation Building”, but when the most productive internet applications use the least amount of bandwidth, it's hard to see the logic in such a statement.

Farmers and miners have been working hard to provide resources for Australia and the world – the primary sector. Manufacturers across many industries have been taking those resources and forming useful and enjoyable products – the secondary sector. People provide services in a range of professions providing for many needs and improving efficiencies in the community – the tertiary sector. Somehow laying overpriced communication infrastructure is to add to this picture, but you'll soon see that this is a fable. Each layer of the Australian economy helps to support the next, and the layers above complement the layers beneath. Today communication plays a big part of the Australian economy, transporting information through all the layers and today it achieves that very well – as productive communication does not require great bandwidth. Video on demand does not improve our resource yield, nor does it improve efficiency in manufacturing. In the services and retail layer HD video provides a small amount of benefit – but nothing worth \$43bn. That means an NBN only marginally helps one sector of the economy, and not the primary or secondary sectors which support Australia. To be given the title “Nation Building”, a project needs to support all sectors to secure Australia's long term future.

There are many other projects which could have been funded and would have well deserved the title of “Nation Building”. Today farmers are benefiting from the snowy river mountain scheme which cost only \$5-7bn – pocket change when compared to the \$43bn price tag. This project was and still is considered an engineering marvel – providing power through hydro generation and water to the Murray darling basin – the breadbasket of Australia. Do those farmers who are now suffering from drought need Video on Demand? Will providing them with fast access to YouTube help Australia? Their livelihoods are constantly at risk, crops are failing and this may just be the beginning. What they need is water, a key resource which will enable Australia to operate and grow. There is a scheme, The Bradford Scheme, which Dr. J. J. C Bradfield proposed in 1938. It involved “diverting the waters of the upper reaches of the Johnson, Tully, Herbert, Burdekin and Flinders Rivers on into the other, then into the Thompson, thence into Lake Eyre, refilling it and, with evaporation” creating a positive climate change and rainfall throughout inland Australia! Imagine leveraging inland Australia for farming and tourism! His plan was comprehensive and daring and was recently costed at only \$100m! Investing in such projects would better deserve the title of “Nation Building”.

A more affordable and future proof broadband network is necessary, but is hardly “Nation Building”. A Fibre to the Premises network does not support hard working Australians, only the recreational needs of domestic users. A title of “Nation Building” must be reserved for schemes which truly support every Australian through all walks of life, supporting them and securing our resources, industries and professionals. It seems that term was merely used to mislead Australians and to justify the enormous amount of money required. More affordable schemes for an NBN exist and should be pursued, and will not need a catch phrase to justify as it can cost a quarter of the price. Sign the petition on NoNBN.org to save billions of mishandled money.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Jargon	Words used only by particular groups or industries (ie. Information Technology)
NBN	National Broadband Network
MP3	Compressed audio
VoIP	Voice over IP. Making a phone call on the internet.
Mbps	Mega bits per second. A measurement of the rate of information transmission
EDI	Electronic Data Interchange. Used in business to business communication, particularly in a “supply chain”. It is most commonly used to automatically generate orders when stock levels are low.
Instant Messaging	The ability to send short messages to one or more people in real-time. Examples include, TXT messaging, MSN IM, Yahoo IM.
HD	High Definition. When referring to video, means that it is very high quality, very clear. Technically there should be at least 2.1 million dots to make up a high definition picture.
VoD	Video on Demand

Video on Demand	The ability to watch a show "on demand". Eg. You want to watch the Simpsons episode 1 from season 1. You find it on your T.V and start watching it within seconds, without pre-downloading it.
Fibre to the Premises	The system planned by the Australian government to connect homes and businesses to the internet. Fibre optic cables are layed all the way the each premises.

Please let us know if there were any other terms you did not understand – we will be happy to refine the document for easier reading.