

## **Migration Assurance Policy Framework and Statement – TITAB Australia comments**

Dear Sir/Madam,

*TITAB Australia* is a member of the Registered Cablers Website Group ((RCWSG) and accordingly TITAB supports the recommendations and comments contained in the Registered Cablers Website Group submission, already provided by the RCWS Group Secretariat.

*TITAB Australia* has some particular interests in cabler accreditation and registration (as an ACMA Accredited registry) , compliance with technical standards, providing industry and customer technical support and in skills development and accordingly would like to highlight some related industry issues, that ultimately have a bearing on national broadband implementation.

### **Introduction**

TITAB Australia is accredited by the ACMA and the largest cabler registry in Australia, with about 28,000 members and operates on a not-for-profit basis. TITAB is a member of a number of industry bodies and receives feedback on topical industry issues from time to time. Overall we believe the departmental documentation to be a good report.

### **Role of the cabling industry**

TITAB welcomes the recognition of a cabling role implied in the departmental documents. It is a role often taken for granted and overshadowed by marketing and other industry hype. However, if the last metre of cabling is not up to standard, the customer angst and re-work involved will neutralize goodwill and add to costs for all parties. Skills development is therefore a key issue and the RCWSG website provides support and industry information, particularly for customers and cabling providers and ready access to qualified cablers.

There is a level of confusion and often complacency in many of the end user population, so the public awareness issue is a vexed one particularly given the complex political conversation that has occurred on appropriate technology and the length of the “communications timeline”.

As stated in the RCWSG Submission, the cabling sector provides information and support, within the limited resources it has for such purposes and can do more with some support from government or agencies.

### **Role of end users**

As stated in the RCWSG submission there is a level of “End User Communications Fatigue” and it is unrealistic to expect users to digest all the information provided in their letterboxes and by the mass media, most of which will be directed to sales and marketing actions. Direct input from the cabler community is needed. Qualified and registered cablers can advise on the technical needs and details of an installation and on issues with alarm monitoring, for example, where particular challenges exist, so the role of our website ([www.registeredcablers.com.au](http://www.registeredcablers.com.au)) is an important adjunct to other mainstream information activity

### **Development of material and human resources to support migration**

TITAB Australia in association with CITT (Communications & Information Technology Training) and the ADTIA (Australian Digital & Telecommunications Association) and some other industry partners, has for some considerable time been advocating for a national program of training and skills development for telecommunications and in particular, the cabling sector.

TITAB has been active in developing telecommunications training packages and support materials and from time to time acted as part of a consultancy advising NBNCO and other enterprises on skills needs and skills development. The notion that there are ex-Telstra staff waiting in the wings as put forward in some sections of the industry and often reported in the media, has long been recognised by TITAB as wishful thinking.

For some years now this notional supply of skilled labour has “dried up” and even those ex-Telstra trained staff who may wish to resume a role in telecommunications, would not do so under current conditions where stop/start projects are common and present contractors, sub- contractors and salaried staff with cash flow issues that do not appear to be recognised by NBN management and some other key players. TITAB and our partners have from time to time prepared industry reports and advice on skills needs and development options for the industry and the NBN.

The RCWSG submission references the development of material to support the migration under two sub-headings: “Preparation for the arrival of the NBN” and “The NBN is here, you have to migrate” and suggests a costing. TITAB supports this proposal but also recommends that:-

- A national telecommunications training and skills development program be implemented and monitored by the department
- A national telecommunications training and skills development program should provide support and incentives to enterprises to take on apprentices, trainees and cadets (engineering). Contracts where practicable, should include a specification for recruitment of new entrants
- The industry skills fund be monitored and developed over time in consultation with industry and that incentives for new entrants to the industry such as toolbox allowances, be restored. Group Training specifically for telecommunications should be in this mix
- That the role of ACMA in ensuring compliance with technical standards and network security/integrity be enhanced and supported with specific funding allocations

The growth of contracting and widespread use of small “mum and dad” sub-contractors has reduced the general level of skills available compared to the previous period where almost all of the training and skills development was managed under a national entity such as PMG/Telecom Australia and Telstra prior to the major privatisation activity of more recent times. Time lines of contracts and lack of continuity in the work cycle make it difficult for contractors to train existing staff and take on new entrants and gain benefit as an enterprise.

## Summary

- TITAB Australia supports the general thrust of the departments drafts
- TITAB Australia supports the RCWSG submission proposals and comments and notes that the issue of telecommunications skills training and development is also directly linked to the objectives of the departmental drafts
- There is a need for departmental support to the cabling sector of the telecommunications industry if the information to NBN consumers is to be accurate and include customer needs as well as the marketing hype

- The cabling sector needs to be engaged directly as it presents face to face opportunities for information dissemination
- A win-win situation is possible with the right industry and government leadership

*Prepared in the national office of TITAB Australia. Authorised by the TITAB Australia Registrar.*

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