



PARKES SHIRE COUNCIL

Progress, opportunities and a quality lifestyle for our residents

LF:CO

Contact Person: Ken Keith

30 September 2014

The Hon. Paul Fletcher, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Fletcher

PARKES SHIRE COUNCIL - MEETING TO DISCUSS LOCAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND RELATED ISSUES

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for making the time available today to discuss Council's concerns in relation to the availability of high speed telecommunications in the Parkes Shire.

Firstly, our concerns whilst acknowledging the benefit of the NBN and the strong desire to participate in its rolled out sooner rather than later, are not designed to interfere with the process currently on foot.

Council fully welcomes the eventual access to high-speed broadband which will transform regional Australia and allow participation in economies never before thought accessible from locations other than the larger centres.

Our concerns at the moment reflect the current state of affairs whilst regional Australia waits for the rollout of the NBN. Parkes is unique in regional Australia insofar as there are few centres of our population with such a strong dynamic platform in terms of its demographic and economic base. The region has experienced positive population growth even during the 10 years of the worst drought in living memory which is largely attributed to the diversified economic base of the region. This diversity places an enormous expectation on all levels of Government to deliver services that are expected in this modern age. It is Council's contention that the growth in our diversified economy has largely caught Telstra somewhat unaware and the local telephone exchange is now reaching capacity in relation to ADSL 1 and ADSL 2 connections.

Council has worked closely with Telstra to advise of community sentiment and alleviate and improve the current bottlenecks which are inhibiting current and potential residential and business customers. Council is able to provide case studies of medium to large businesses within Parkes who are reporting significant disadvantage in their supply chain management and business plans due to difficulties being experienced with the speed of the Internet through the Parkes exchange. Obviously there are available technical solutions but under the current Telstra pricing model, costs are highly prohibitive and somewhat discriminatory given that similar cloud-based services are available to other regions that are not experiencing the same bottleneck difficulties and therefore do not require costly solutions.

Council would also like to discuss with you the need to logically plan for the future of transport and freight logistics in Australia which will rise to prominence as part of the nation building Melbourne to Brisbane Rail Project. The planning of this game-changing infrastructure is of significant importance to the Parkes Shire as the studies and the acknowledged geographic location reveal that Parkes will play a pivotal role in the success of the endeavour. As supply chain logistics improve across the nation, the need for high-speed dependable broadband telecommunications is paramount to providing the competitive edge for national and international markets that will be opened up by the installation of improvements to rail and road infrastructure. Whilst it may be considered sometime off, it is important that the Federal Government consults widely with private sector freight and supply chain management organisations to identify how best to provide the telecommunications infrastructure that will ensure the efficiencies are delivered. It is often stated that a 1% improvement in freight efficiencies will deliver over \$1 billion in savings to the national economy. Thus the improvement in freight efficiencies are highly dependent upon available and consistent high-speed telecommunications.

As a local Government Authority we deal with future and current businesses and residents on a daily basis who are finding it difficult to access the promised benefits of decentralisation and cheaper baseline business costs when access to the expected technology is currently unachievable. We understand that it is a waiting game until such time as the NBN blankets the nation, however in the mean time opportunities are being lost at the local and regional level.

I am sure further points will emerge during our discussions today, however I thought it important I formally thank you for the opportunity to discuss our concerns and to provide a conduit for further dialogue on these important issues.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Ken Keith OAM
MAYOR