



MEDIA RELEASE

**NBN LAUNCH WELCOMED –
OPPOSITION POLICY BACKWARDS
(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)**

Hobart, TAS, 12 August 2010 – Digital Tasmania today welcomed the official launch of the NBN in Tasmania by the Federal Government. Andrew Connor, spokesperson for Digital Tasmania, praised the efforts of all involved with rolling out the network's first stage in Tasmania.

"Tasmanians are immensely proud of the fact that our state has been selected as the first area to roll out the National Broadband Network. We hope the Federal and State Governments, NBN Tasmania and its contractors are just as proud of how far it has progressed in just 16 months through their efforts."

"Starting the rollout of the NBN in an underserved area such as Tasmania was exactly what we as a consumer group wanted to see. We applaud the State Government's initiative in being the only state to make a submission through the initial NBN process, and the Federal Government in recognising the value in starting the rollout here." Mr Connor said.

"Tasmania historically has suffered from a lack of true choice in telecommunication services. Today marks a new era in the telecommunications market in this state, as Tasmanian consumers are set to reap the rewards of a truly competitive broadband market based on a level playing field."

"The NBN resolves two major impediments to Australia's telecommunications future: existing customer access systems which are ageing and literally dying, as well as a competitive environment which has not served consumers well."

"Now that the NBN has been launched in these three towns, the wider community of Tasmania and Australia can see that Fibre to the Premises is not simply a pipe dream, but a serious means of telecommunications which will drive Australia's economy into the future."

Since its inception, Digital Tasmania has been a strong supporter of 'best-of-breed' technologies, such as Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) technology. "This technology has been tried and tested around the world and certainly will not become obsolete any time soon." Mr Connor explained.

"It's now up to consumers in these towns and across Tasmania to get online and to explore the possibilities that the NBN provides to enrich many areas of life."

Opposition Policy Backwards

At today's launch of stage 1 of the NBN in Tasmania, Digital Tasmania attacked Tuesday's announcement of the Coalition's broadband policy.

“Today provides a stark contrast for voters in Tasmania, who must decide whether we wish to become one of the most connected places in the world, or go back to being a state with less choice than any other in terms of phone and Internet service providers?”

“Today we have seen the first steps into our broadband future with the launch of the NBN. On the other hand, the Coalition’s policy will not deliver tomorrow’s broadband access, it’s not even delivering today’s broadband.

This is a bandaid program which is all about entrenching yesterday’s broadband for the next 10 years.” “Such a backward step would see us going from potentially having 200,000 Tasmanian homes and businesses interconnected at next generation speeds of 100Mbps, to having virtually none.”

“Tasmania stands to lose the most out of this proposal to replace future-proof Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) with inferior wireless technology. There simply is no way that this wireless network being proposed will grow at the rate which will be required to adequately service Tasmanian customers over the next 10 years.“

In response to the State Liberal opposition’s support of the Coalition’s policy, Mr Connor was sceptical. “We think Will Hodgman has been sadly misled if he believes that these two broadband plans offer equal outcomes for Tasmania. The NBN is today investing \$700 million into infrastructure in this state - how much will the Liberal Party invest?”

“We do however agree with Mr Hodgman on one thing: the decision on this ultimately rests with the Tasmanian people. Digital Tasmania would ask that on August 21st, every Tasmanian voter considers whether Tasmania really deserves to be kicked back to the bottom rung of the Broadband ladder?”

Mr Connor said that there was a very real economic cost to Tasmania in the Coalition’s policy. “Along with ripping nearly three quarters of a billion dollars of infrastructure investment out of our state, millions of dollars of productivity gains and potential ICT related investments will be lost.”

The Coalition’s reliance on existing commercial provider networks such as the Hybrid Fibre Coax (HFC) cable television network offered no benefit to Tasmanians, said Mr Connor.

“Under the Coalition policy, we do not expect a single consumer in this state will be able to access fixed line broadband any faster in 2016 than they can TODAY. There is simply no allowance in the Coalition’s policy for the increased demand for broadband capacity which is projected to occur over the next 10 years.”

“The Coalition derides the idea of a government monopoly, yet this very same plan will all but return Telstra to an unassailable monopoly position in this state, as no other telco has gained sufficient foothold in Tasmania.”

About Digital Tasmania:

Digital Tasmania is a consumer action group, created to give a voice to the views and needs of Tasmanian consumers in the digital age. More information including its submission to the Senate Committee can be found on the group’s website, <http://www.digitaltasmania.org>

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For further comment or to schedule an interview, contact Digital Tasmania on 0432 870 881, or email media@digitaltasmania.org