COMMUNICATIONS DAY

Industry splits over shape of NBN future

Fresh rifts are opening in the telecoms sector over the direction a national broadband solution should take, with a storm of controversy erupting in response to the Alliance for Affordable Broadband's 'NBNv3' manifesto even as other stakeholders publicly reaffirm their commitment to Labor's FTTP NBN model. News sites, email discussion lists and the Whirlpool forums exploded with a host of questions over the Alliance's proposed network model after the group went public with their ideas.

The setup would see a blend of government and private funding backing a mix of technologies to supply ubiquitous broadband to Australians – albeit without the extensive fibre footprint, concomitant fast speeds and high costs of the Gillard government's NBN plan, instead placing more emphasis on 4G wireless.

Commentary ranged from accusations of political partisanship and pursuit of vested interest, through queries over projected speeds and latencies, to indications of support for the Alliance's suggestions.

Members of the industry group, including Pipe Networks founder Bevan Slattery and EFTel CEO John Lane, took to Whirlpool to field some of the questions.

Meanwhile, the Alliance's proposal has set it at odds with a number of other ISPs who have publically backed the FTTP NBN – including Primus and Macquarie Telecom, who have taken out a post-election ad in the Armidale Express proclaiming that the current iteration of the project constitutes the only way to "bridge the gap between regional and metro Australia in health care services, education services, job opportunities [and] access for business to international markets." "

BROADBAND: It's NOW or NEVER

There is only one way to bridge the gap between regional and metro Australia in:

• HEALTH CARE SERVICES
• REGIONAL AGED CARE SERVICES
• EDUCATION SERVICES
• JOB OPPORTUNITIES
• ACCESS FOR BUSINESS TO INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Only a truly national, truly high-speed, wholesale-only broadband network that is independently owned and operated can bridge the gap and drive growth in regional Australia.

Only when this network is rolled out will new providers be able to enter this market, giving you greater choice, lower costs and increased variety of services.

A national, high-speed, wholesale-only network is being built today. If it is stopped, these opportunities will be gone forever. If it's built, companies like ours are ready, willing and able to service regional communities like never before.

Don't throw away your future

macquarie TELECOM   PRIMUS TELECOM

The Armidale Express · PAGE 2 · Wednesday, August 25, 2010

A national, high-speed, wholesale-only network is being built today. If it is stopped, these opportunities will be gone forever," argued the two telcos.

Primus CEO Ravi Bhatia was keen to emphasise that the advertisement was not a partisan message. "This is not a political ad like Bevan's press release... it's for the interests of Australia, no matter who's in power," he told CommsDay. "It's a not a question of politics, it's a question of the needs of Australia, of the people of Australia, of the businesses of Australia to have a sound economic future. It's not about Labor vs Liberal."

On the other hand, the Primus CEO denounced the Alliance's own messaging as being too closely

aligned to the Liberal broadband policy at a delicate political juncture. "The timing of this announcement is appalling," he said. "We in the telecoms industry are apolitical, and in the opinion of most informed observers of this industry, FTTH is the way to go in the best interests of Australia, its people, and its businesses. It is important for our future productivity and competitiveness."

Macquarie Telecom could not be reached for comment by the time of going to press; however, chief executive David Tudehope was recently quoted by the Australian Financial Review as advocating the current NBN plan as "better for industry and government."

<div style="text-align: right">Petroc Wilton</div>

Internode opens Brisbane office, new exchanges to follow

Broadband provider Internode has opened its first office in Brisbane and will soon make an announcement on a number of new exchanges equipped with its own synchronous (SHDSL) gear for the Queensland business sector.

Internode national sales manager Daryl Knight told CommsDay that work was already underway at the new exchanges, which will be in prominent business locations. He said a more detailed announcement would be made shortly. Internode currently has about 20 telephone exchanges in Queensland equipped with its own ADSL2+ broadband equipment.

The state contributed nearly 15 percent of the company's revenues in the past financial year and Knight said it was the fastest growing region. "Queensland is already a major market for Internode, so this is about taking it to the next level," he said.

Four new hires have been made for the office, which will only deal with corporate customers for Internode's business services. These include ADSL2+, Private IP networks, synchronous (SHDSL) Internet access and cloud-based services such as virtual private servers. The new staff comprise two business development managers, a pre-sales engineer and a sales support/office administration person.

The office in Adelaide Street, above Brisbane's Central train station, is around 300 square metres, which Knight said would fit the company's plans for staff growth once it becomes established.

He described the Queensland market as being similar to Adelaide, which he said was very "relationship driven". "Our primary focus is on building business relationships because commercial and enterprise organisations contribute about 40 percent of Internode's total revenues nationally," Knight said, adding that it would aim to achieve the same level of activity in Queensland.

Knight also pointed out that current corporate customers in Queensland would retain their existing Adelaide-based account managers, while the Brisbane-based staff would target new business.

"Whereas residential broadband sales are quite straightforward decisions, based on quality of service and price, business purchases are more complicated. The team we're putting into our Brisbane office will assist businesses with choosing the right configuration of services to meet their specific needs," he said.

<div style="text-align: right">Geoff Long</div>

Do Not Call register targeted by telemarketers

In a twist of irony probably not appreciated by scammers, telemarketers are offering to list consumers' phone numbers on the Do Not Call Register – for a fee, according to the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

As ACMA chairman Chris Chapman points out, the register is a free service funded by the Federal government. He also warned consumers not to provide any personal identification or financial details to the telemarketers making the calls.

Chapman said the ACMA had received more than 30 complaints about the scams over the last month, although the actual number of scam calls being made is likely to be far higher.

Acting CEO of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Teresa Corbin, told CommsDay that the register had more than 4 million Australian phone numbers listed and was still the

most effective way to stop telemarketing calls.

"This is an outrageous scam that unfortunately will most likely impact on the most vulnerable in our society. ACCAN hopes that the ACMA tracks down the scammers as soon as possible to ensure the integrity of the Do Not Call Register," Corbin said.

Meanwhile, ACCAN's recruitment process to find a new CEO to replace Allan Asher is underway, according to the organisation.

Geoff Long

ABC mobile offering hits record numbers

The ABC has marked the explosive growth of mobile devices as a vector for its content, with visits to its mobile platform ramping up 105% in the last year .

By the second week of August, total weekly visits to the ABC's mobile site had hit 50,800, against 25,000 for the same time last year. Purpose-built apps were also wildly popular, with downloads of the ABC's iPhone app hitting 1 million in seventeen months and its iPad app reaching 100,000 in just two and a half months.

"The ABC followed audiences onto mobile with a fairly simple offering 18 months ago," said ABC Innovation acting director Bruce Belsham. "Since then we have seen a rapid acceleration of people using mobile devices to get their news and entertainment."

"Mobile devices are a real growth story in modern media – enabling more and more Australians to both experience and share content," added MD Mark Scott. "Our audience is taking their ABC with them wherever they go, and in record numbers."

The ABC now supports services tailored for mobile platforms that include specific Android, Black-Berry, iPhone and Java apps, in addition to its purpose-built mobile website.

Petroc Wilton

IP surveillance firm wins local gov't deal at Moreton Bay

Axis Communications has clinched a deal to supply its IP HDTV cameras to Moreton Bay Regional Council as part of a contract with Link Security Group to deploy an extensive wireless IP video surveillance network.

Australia's third largest local government will use funds from the Federal Government's Safer Cities project as a Federal Government Initiative to deploy the surveillance network, which features 130 square kilometres of mesh coverage. The system integrates wireless infrastructure mesh from Firetide, network cameras from Axis Communications and video management software from Milestone Systems.

The extended coverage area and stringent performance specifications were the major factors in selecting a wireless product for the ongoing project. 42 Firetide outdoor mesh nodes form the infrastructure backbone, supporting close to 50 outdoor IP video surveillance cameras. The network features Axis' outdoor cameras including the pan-tilt-zoom Q6032-E for their optics package and the HDTV P1344 cameras that transmit video at 30 frames per second in HD resolution.

"Where image quality is the key consideration it is important to have full frame rate video streaming so that activities in a scene and fast-moving objects can be easily seen and captured," said Axis' ANZ country manager Wai King Wong. "Our HDTV cameras are compliant with the SMPTE standards in resolution, frame rate, colour fidelity and aspect ratio."

Wong is also quietly confident that the applications explosion we have witnessed on devices such as the iPhone will be replicated on the Linux-based open-standards system the Axis cameras operate on. "We can actually have other software sitting in the camera itself," said Wong. "It could be a people-counting solution, maybe in the future facial-recognition software as well. So these you can actually implement onto the camera rather than rely on the server."

In line with this confidence, Axis is looking to boost headcount locally, by making additions to the pair of new recruits it hired back in June.

Miro Sandev

Vocus selects Arbor for DDoS attack shield

Vocus Communications has picked US-based network security and management specialist Arbor Networks' Peakflow SP platform for protection against distributed denial of service attacks.

Arbor touts its Peakflow SP platform as the de facto standard for IP flow-based network security, visibility and analysis. The company also claims that it enables organisations to reduce cost by improving IPv4 and IPv6 traffic engineering and operational efficiencies. The platform is integrated with Arbor's threat management system that, according to the company, detects and surgically removes only attack traffic while maintaining legitimate business traffic.

"Being an island nation, we are very dependent upon our international submarine cables for connectivity to the rest of the world," said Arbor's ANZ country manager Nick Race. "By deploying Peakflow TMS at their US POP, Vocus can prevent these links from becoming congested under DDoS attack while ensuring network availability to their customers."

"Arbor's products are unique in their ability to deliver a combination of real-time attack identification, mitigation and reporting," said Vocus CEO James Spenceley. "This enables Vocus to not only secure our infrastructure, but offer "Clean Internet" services to service providers across Australia and New Zealand."

Vocus has also joined Arbor's Fingerprint Sharing Alliance – a collaborative industry initiative which is aimed at helping service providers share internet attack information automatically.

Miro Sandev

Vividwireless taps RightNow CX for customer care

Vividwireless has waded into the customer service arms race by deploying RightNow CX to help support its customer care initiatives across phone, web, email and chat channels.

The wireless player is attempting to differentiate itself by focusing on customer experience across products, services and now customer care. To this end, it has enlisted the help of RightNow to launch online and contact centre customer care initiatives; the firm's RightNow CX suite, which includes web, social media and contact centre branches, features a single, centralised customer contact record which is integrated with client systems such as billing engines. "We needed a system that would integrate with existing systems, scale over time as required and be easy to use – for customers and staff," said Vividwireless CEO Martin Mercer.

"In among those criteria was the very real need to get a better handle on the voice of the customer, understanding what they need from us, where we could be doing better and where we're doing well," Mercer continued. "RightNow's ability to offer all of that through a single system was a critical selection point because now we're able to gain visibility into customer trends and make better informed business decision on the back of the data."

Vividwireless also recently established a call centre in Perth to support customers following the launch of its wireless network there in March. The company is now deploying its service to inner-city markets across the country.

Miro Sandev

Telstra set to deploy new Torres Strait telco network

Telstra Countrywide has joined forces with the Torres Strait Island Regional Council to deploy a new telecommunications network across the outer islands of the Strait.

As reported by the ABC, the A$5.3 million project will see high-speed radio rolled out on five islands and local exchanges upgraded on a further fifteen. Telstra Countrywide spokesman Lou Boyle said that the upgrade would bring the region up to the standard of the rest of the country.

"It's a significant investment by Telstra and TSIRC and the outcome will be the delivery of improved services, increased speeds and better technology, which will allow council and indeed other organisations to improve the way they communicate and do business in the region," said Boyle.

According to TSIRC mayor Fred Gela, Telstra's involvement in the rollout is the fruit of eighteen months' negotiation.

MOBILEACTIVE APPS GLOBAL SALES OVER 750,000 DOWNLOADS

Sales of mobile applications produced by MobileActive's RingRing Studios have edged over 750,000 downloads globally. All time mobile app downloads have increased by 50% in the last four months and MobileActive claims industry forecasts for global mobile apps growth are strong, supported by increasing smart phone diversity and distribution. MobileActive MD Neil Wiles said: "We are continuing to add new distributors across channels and areas of the globe."

NEW ZEALAND

Supreme Court rules 0867 not abusive

New Zealand's Supreme Court confirmed yesterday that Telecom NZ did not abuse its market power when it imposed the 0867 dialing prefix on Clear Communications in 1999.

The nation's highest court rejected an appeal by the Commerce Commission which had previously lost cases against Telecom NZ over the 0867 prefix in the both the High Court and the Court of Appeal.

Telecom NZ introduced the prefix at a time when residential dial internet access was growing fast. There is no charge for local calling in New Zealand under the terms of the Kiwi Share Obligation (KSO), but Telecom NZ was paying termination charges when traffic was fed to another network.

The Telecom NZ network was congested with dial-up internet traffic and the company received no additional revenue to pay for upgrades. At the time ISPs switched to Clear's network to share in the termination fees being paid by Telecom NZ.

Telecom NZ introduced the 0867 number which it regarded as sitting outside the KSO and therefore didn't involve a termination charge. Customers were then charged 2 cents an hour for internet calls beyond 10 hours per month, but there were no charges if calls were made to an 0867 number.

The Commerce Commission's case was based on the idea Telecom NZ's move was not only about redressing the termination fee issue but also a deliberate move to "make life much more difficult for its competitors."

In 1999 the Commerce Commission claimed Telecom NZ's move to introduce a range of numbers for dial-up Internet access was in breach of Section 36 of the Commerce Act. The Act, which has since been amended, aims to stop dominant companies from abusing their market position.

When the first case appeared the High Court ruled Telecom NZ has not used any market dominance it may have had, nor did it behave anti-competitively. The court found Telecom NZ had engaged in: "normal profit maximising behaviour, to be expected of any firm, dominant or otherwise."

The Supreme Court ordered the Commerce Commission to pay Telecom NZ NZ$50,000 in costs.

Telecom NZ said it welcomed the decision. Tristan Gilbertson, Telecom NZ general counsel said: "This decision reinforces the robust test for anti-competitive conduct that has applied in New Zealand for over a decade. The Court has recognised the importance of avoiding changes in the law that would blur the line between legitimate and illegitimate business conduct and dampen competitive intensity in the market."

<div align="right">Bill Bennett</div>

GEN-I REFRESHES EDEN PARK TECH AHEAD OF RWC

Telecom NZ subsidiary Gen-I has won a contract to upgrade technology at Auckland's Eden Park in time for next year's Rugby World Cup. The company already provides fixed and mobile voice and data. In addition it will work with Cisco to build a new IP network that includes digital signs, WiFi, automated ticketing, security and building management. Gen-i will also boost Eden Park's mobile network capacity and coverage. David Kennedy, Eden Park Trust's CEO, said the Rugby World Cup 2011 will put New Zealand on the global stage: "It is vital the Trust provides telecommunications services for international media to engage with the world and spectators to easily use mobile communications."

Kiribati to get satellite net access via Pactel

Pactel International has partnered with TSKL, a local carrier in the Republic of Kiribati, to provide satellite internet services.

Access will be delivered by the RICS (Rural Internet Connectivity System) with download speeds between 256kbps and 2Mbps using a 1.2m KU band antenna.

Pactel CEO Andrew Taylor said countries like Kiribati are his company's prime focus in the Pacific. He said: "We acknowledge the importance of internet links like these into the remote regions. We appreciate the trust local operators like TSKL have in our abilities to deliver vital telecommunication services".

The company has already supplied RICS links to local schools, hospitals and small businesses in remote areas of the country.

It says a key part of the RICS service is self-installation where customers can commission satellite dishes without paying costly installation fees. The service runs on 110V/220V or 24 Volts and consumes only 35 Watts of power, which means it can be used with solar-power equipment.

Bill Bennett

SINGAPORE NBN OPENS FOR BUSINESS– WITH SLOWER SPEEDS FOR GLOBAL DOWNLOADS

Singapore's national broadband network has commenced operations with five retail service providers selling its services from day one. Along with existing players SingTel, StarHub and M1, two carriers targeting SMEs—SuperInternet and LGA– have also come on board. SingTel's NBN plans include a S$86 a month plan that offers 150Mbps download speeds, but interestingly only 15Mbps speeds for international downloads. A more expensive $95 plan offers 200Mbps local/25Mbps global download speeds as part of a bundle with SingTel's mioTV service. The higher priced bundles are also highly complex, offering, for example, discounts on mobile services, some free movies and discounts on international calls. SingTel's business plans are priced at between S$248 and S$298. M1 and SuperInternet are offering slightly slower 100Mbps speeds at cheaper prices in the S$50-60 range. But M1 is also offering an uber one gigabit service priced at S$399 per month.

Comment by Strategic Networks Group president Michael Curri

Australia's broadband future hangs in the balance

With election results still trickling in over a week past election day, it is still unclear which party – the Liberal or incumbent Labor will emerge in power. The months and weeks leading up to the election were fascinating on many levels – but let's just focus on one very significant issue – the National Broadband Network.

Hotly contested, Labor's $43 billion National Broadband Network would provide 100 megabits per second broadband access to approximately 93 percent of the population.

Currently Australia has – for the most part – slow and expensive Internet service. In conjunction, the NBN plan calls for a boost in broadband investment for businesses with hopes that it would directly support economic growth during the rollout.

The other side of the aisle, the challenging Liberal party wants to scrap the plan in favour of a $6.3 billion, privately run alternative.

All eyes in the broadband industry are waiting to see which side – and with them their broadband plan – will win out. Well we're still waiting as the parliament remains hung while each side hope to sway Independents over to their side.

While we wait, let's look at the issues:

- What is the $43 billion based on and is that an appropriate level?
- Who should build it? – and operate it?
- What return on investment can Australia expect from its broadband investment – be $43 or $6 billion?
- Will broadband investment result in a platform for innovation, competitiveness and growth that could propel Australia into a hotbed of technology and development?

These are important questions and no matter the party affiliation, taxpayers should be told how their money will be used – and what benefits and outcomes to expect.

Unfortunately, there has not been much discussion on the two most important aspects of this debate: how individual businesses, organizations and households would use the new broadband capacity – and what the economic or social impacts will be. Without that understanding there is no meaningful economic case, let alone business case, for investing in such a network. The economic case is the most important as many of the economic and social benefits are 'off-balance sheet' to the telcos.

Support and urgency for high-speed and high quality broadband connectivity gets lost without this critical information on utilization and quantified impacts – information that should be part of any due diligence. For example, if looking at a certain hospital – are they using remote diagnostics, electronic patient records, etc. – and should they be if they don't? For businesses, if their utilisation of e-solutions and Internet-enabled business practices is not at par with their global competition ... what share of business can they expect to win in a globally competitive economy?

The community return on investment (Community ROI) needs to be understood because it is the only way that governments can justify using public monies to build broadband networks.

Explanation of current versus future demand for broadband is based on the utilisation of e-solutions. When investing, you need to identify and understand the gaps between how e-solutions are currently being used versus how e-solutions can and should be used to maximize economic and social benefits. It is business 101 – you identify the need, you understand your customers and then you build your product or service to address the needs of the customers you want to target. This approach is taken when building the hardware that makes-up broadband networks, but this approach seems to be put aside when those broadband networks are being designed and planned.

Just like roads, high quality broadband networks enable economic activity and social services whose benefits far exceed the initial investment.

Whichever party forms the majority, they need to approach high speed broadband network investments focused on the demand-side (current and future) with the understanding that they are building infrastructure that serves all sectors of a modern economy. To realise these productivity and competitiveness benefits, Australia needs to act decisively and quickly. The opportunity cost of broadband infrastructure being hostage to politics will be borne by the Australian people.

<div align="right">

Michael Curri
President, Strategic Networks Group (France)

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