

New Government must give priority to the Digital Economy

Sydney, 3 September 2010 The incoming Federal Government should take immediate steps to maximise Australias ability to benefit from the Digital Economy.

The CEO of Communications Alliance, John Stanton, said that the communications industry is pleased that a discussion about upgrading Australias telecommunications infrastructure has been a key policy issue in this election.

Communications Alliance is happy to work with the incoming Government to deliver a broadband network that will meet the long term needs of all Australians. In doing so, it is important that the future Government develops a whole-of-government approach to the opportunities that every Australian can reap from the Digital Economy, Mr Stanton said.

Communications Alliance has mobilised more than 150 individuals from across the telecommunications sector over the past 12 months to craft practicable industry-based solutions to aid the roll-out of a National Broadband Network.

Mr Stanton said the key objectives of the national approach to upgrading Australias national telecommunications infrastructure should be to deliver:

High-speed broadband at affordable prices to all Australians, delivered on a national platform

An efficient and sustainable approach to providing services to regional and remote end users

A market structure that provides a platform for innovation in metropolitan and regional Australia

A regulatory regime that provides equivalence of opportunity for all industry participants and promotes competition throughout Australia

Reform to better manage commercial disputes and avoid regulatory delay.

To deliver on these objectives, Communications Alliance believes that there must be a long term strategy to replace the copper based network with a next generation open access solution. In undertaking an assessment on what is the best long term approach, all access technologies should be considered including fibre, wireless and satellite, Mr Stanton said.

Communications Alliance also proposed the creation of a Cabinet Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, to ensure that policy settings across key Government portfolios are synchronised to harness the full potential of the digital revolution.

Mr Stanton said that, ideally the Ministers responsible for Communications, Regional Development, Transport, Education, Health, Aged Care, Employment, Energy and Science would all play key roles on the Committee, alongside the Prime Minister.

We see many good Digital Economy initiatives underway in individual departments and agencies at the Federal and State level, but the new Prime Minister needs to get personally involved and ensure that Australia can benefit fully from the synergies and productivity gains that will come from aligning all the sectors of Government responsibility, Mr Stanton said.

He said the new Government should also look at creating a Joint House Committee to examine Digital Economy issues in regional Australia, and should make the Digital Economy a priority issue for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE

Communications Alliance is the peak body for the Australian communications industry. It presents a unified voice for its members in public policy, facilitates industry solutions to industry issues, and provides up-to-date information on industry issues. Communications Alliance is also leading the industry's response to the National Broadband Network implementation. For further information see www.commsalliance.com.au

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