

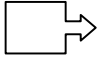
**TAMAR VALLEY:  
Community Campaign to get NBN 'Fibre to the Home'**

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## SECTION 1: OUR ISSUES AND WHO WE ARE

### **WE ARE PROTESTING FOR, NOT AGAINST**

**Protest groups** are usually *against* a proposal, a project or an institution that is not solving perceived problems to their satisfaction.

We are a protest group with a difference because we are **resoundingly in favour** of the super-fast NBN and 'fibre to the home'.

Our protest is because current plans call for the super-fast fibre-optic service to exclude our region, the Tamar Valley.

We want it, and we think we should get it, for the following reasons:

- Dilston residents are only 5 km from the northernmost Launceston fibre-optic connection point at Newnham.
- What affects Dilston in turn affects the entire commuter corridor Dilston/Windermere/Swan Bay/Hillwood/Mount Direction, all of which will miss out on 'fibre to the home'.
- This Upper East Tamar region represents a community of almost 2,000 people and approximately 600 premises, with considerable future development in the planning stages.
- Our community socio-economic profile suggests we will provide a high uptake of the NBN 'Opt-In' policy.
- We are ratepayers of Launceston City Council, the largest Council in Tasmania in terms of population.
- Launceston is one of the top ten regional centres in Australia<sup>1</sup>.
- Launceston — and the Tamar Valley — is a major tourist destination.

#### **Inequity**

**Current plans are for the NBN to create a two-tier caste system, with regions like ours being relegated to second-class service.**

Photocopied on recycled paper

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<sup>1</sup> McCrindle Research [www.mccrindle.com.au](http://www.mccrindle.com.au) 2010

## **WHO WE ARE AND WHY WE ARE CAMPAIGNING**

Think of all the residents in this area who need a fast, reliable internet facility – tourism operators and tourist-related businesses, office workers, retailers, healthcare professionals, academics, teleworkers, teachers, IT specialists, writers, home businesses, orchardists, vineyards and winemakers, realtors, agriculturalists. The list goes on, from school children to retirees.

### ***Why wireless won't be good enough***

Significantly, and what is rarely discussed by NBN Co and seemingly misunderstood by government, is that the NBN is not about giving all Australians a faster connection. It is about universal access to quality broadband that is 'future proof'. Fibre meets these requirements. But, in Australia, we are disregarding all international research and broadband rollouts in other nations where fixed wireless and satellite options are seen as lower quality and connections of last resort only when fibre or an upgrade of existing cable services is not possible. Some experts warn that ignoring all the research will be at our peril, that there will be dire consequences.

Compounding uncertainty is our understanding that, at some undisclosed time after 2014 many East Tamar residents and businesses will also lose landline telephone and internet services. This is because the copper cables supplying these services are to be phased out, and replaced with fixed wireless instead of fibre. If this happens, we may be worse off than we are now.

This would be disastrous for an area where mobile phones and television signals are grossly unreliable and drop-out problems and power outages are a common occurrence. The wireless (or satellite) option is lower quality, over 10 to as much as 1000 times slower than speeds announced for fibre, less reliable and therefore less desired by our community.

Clearly, our preferred option is fibre. It makes commercial and social sense to make this investment now. If the 'East Tamar' is a model for regional Australia and we do not get fibre then the purported universal coverage and reach of the NBN fibre rollout to 93% of Australian premises has to be challenged.

### ***Wireless means many residents in our community will be even less connected***

Some of us, such as older residents, will be especially vulnerable. With an unreliable, and possibly a non-operational, mobile phone signal, what will we do when we are ill? Under stress? Experiencing a power blackout? What about when we simply need to contact our family? What will happen when parents need to contact their children?

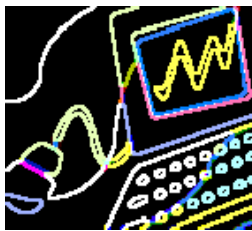
### **Only three years away**

**The current issue for us is the uncertainty post-2014. That's only three years away. To remove all uncertainty and resolve the problems, we need confirmation that we will receive fibre to the home. We need real answers about the proposed phasing out of the copper landlines.**

## ***Help us Get Connected!***

A group of concerned residents have come together at this early stage of the NBN roll-out to make sure that we are not excluded from the NBN 'fibre to the home'. With our community profile, we believe we far exceed the minimum 'Opt-In' rate required by NBN Co. That should make us an attractive prospect. That, plus the fact that Dilston, the start-point of our community corridor, is only five km from the northernmost Launceston fibre-optic connection point at Newnham.

That's why we've called our action group: *Get Connected*.



***THE RESIDENTS OF  
DILSTON, WINDERMERE, SWAN BAY, HILLWOOD  
AND MOUNT DIRECTION WANT TO  
GET CONNECTED***

### ***Contacts***

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Check our website: [tvnbnc.wetpaint.com/](http://tvnbnc.wetpaint.com/)

## **MANY COMMUNITIES FEEL SHORT-CHANGED\***

Dilston, Windermere, Swan Bay, Hillwood and Mount Direction are not the only communities that will be affected in Tasmania and the rest of Australia.

We understand that on the West Tamar people living more than 200 metres from the fibre-optic backbone will be in much the same position as us.

That's the Tamar Valley story, but there are many more areas that will be similarly affected. Not just in Tasmania, but on the mainland too.

**We are being bombarded by conflicting information about who will get 'fibre to the home', who will get wireless, who will get satellite.\***

***There is a lot of uncertainty. We are asking for full disclosure.***

## **Our future growth and development under threat**

With such an uncertain connection to what is supposed to be 'the digital world', families and businesses will be reluctant to invest in the area.

The lack of FTTH infrastructure has an impact on regional development. It will severely limit appeal to residents who see broadband as essential a service as water and power. This affects home prices and employment prospects. It will severely hamper the Tamar Valley's ability to attract and grow small business, and access future government, education and health services.

International studies<sup>2</sup> have demonstrated that the lack of high-speed broadband in rural and regional areas:

- Reduces employment prospects
- Increases costs of, and decreases access to, government services
- Hampers attraction and retention of business
- Lowers home prices
- Stymies innovation

**We ask the Federal and State Government to fulfil their promises to provide an affordable and accessible NBN service, and to provide *universal* service to *all* Australians that, as a minimum, is guaranteed to improve the *quality and speed* of what exists today.**

**\* See list of sources at end of document**

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<sup>2</sup> Bowles, M. 2011, *NBN Impact on Regional Development*, UNE Monograph.

## **Community concerns raised**

At an initial meeting (12 October 2010) at Dilston Hall attended by residents and Launceston City Council Aldermen Jeremy Ball and Rosemary Armitage, and by subsequent networking in this tight-knit community, residents resolved to put into action a concerted effort to persuade local politicians and councillors to make representation to the State Government to modify the current plan of the NBN Co in Tasmania (TNBN Co).

## **RECENT ACTION**

- This kit is being distributed widely to political representatives, media etc.
- **Get Connected** has met with Launceston City Council (25 October)
- The local community newspaper **Smoke Signals** has printed two articles detailing the issues, and seeking community support
- ABC's (Drive) Roisin McCann conducted a radio interview with Ms Trixie Gillard, a '**Get Connected**' spokesperson
- **Get Connected** had a productive meeting with Kerry Finch, MLC, Independent Member for Rosevears
- Our elected State representatives have raised the issue in Parliament. Our thanks to Ivan Dean MLC, Independent Member for Windermere, Kim Booth MP Greens Member for Bass, and Kerry Finch MLC, Independent Member for Rosevears

The community refuses to accept that an area such as Dilston, which is only 10 minutes from the CBD of one of Australia's top 10 largest regional centres, can be offered only an unspecified wireless or satellite service with inferior speeds, quality and ability to scale to meet the demands of the digital future.

## **First challenge: How to take our case to TNBN Co**

**Tasmanian regions not receiving FTTH apparently have no formal avenue to make a case to the NBN Co in Tasmania (TNBN Co) based on social or economic or any other need.**

The rest of Australia has been allowed the opportunity for pre-rollout consultation with local governments and businesses. In the rest of Australia NBN Co nationally prioritises construction based not just on population density, but on existing services, demand and need. In Tasmania this is not the case.

**If we in Tasmania had the same rights to conduct audits based on the same criteria as the rest of the country, we believe that many areas of our State could easily make the case for being connected to fibre.**

### **Criteria that would be looked at in the rest of Australia:**

- Lack of existing quality high-speed broadband services, including an ageing paired copper cable infrastructure
- Poor cellular coverage and black spots
- Lack of signal coverage for analogue television
- Growth of businesses and regional population
- An employment base in agricultural, transport, tourism, education and specialist small businesses known to be positively affected by availability of digital infrastructure
- A population with significantly younger people and older Australians who can benefit from government services (especially e-health and online education)

## **Looming danger of entrenching a ‘two-speed’ economy**

I don't think government appreciates the impact of Dilston and our sister suburbs in Launceston not receiving fibre under the National Broadband Network. Is the NBN simply a short-term plan to roll out fibre to high population density areas and replace existing metropolitan high-speed broadband networks? That certainly does not appear to be the reason for the investment. Or is it about universal coverage and allowing all Australians access to affordable, better quality, higher speed broadband? If this is the aim then we need to have fibre to replace the expensive, unreliable DSL (Digital Subscriber Line) services we in the outer suburbs and non-metropolitan areas have now. We must acknowledge that fibre and cable services are better quality and more affordable options than fixed wireless or satellite on offer to those not receiving fibre. ***If we do not change our thinking we are in danger of entrenching a ‘two speed’ economy.***

In any debate over our ‘digital future’ this nation has to envision opportunities not just for those living and working in the city. The digital future we should aspire to is where jobs of the future can locate in our regions, help relieve population problems in the CBDs and provide the means for regional business and industry to thrive. It is a future where agriculture, mining, retail and transport operations, which are the heart of Australia and our regions, can share data and trade across digitally enabled supply chains. It is where populations can access government services in areas such as health, education and communication in ways that reduce costs and improve well being.

The analogy for regional Australia is to consider fibre as we considered essential infrastructure in the past. ***Having fibre is as essential to productivity, attracting businesses and investment as are road, rail, water and electricity. In its absence regions cannot compete.*** We will continue to lose businesses and people to cities where essential infrastructure exists.

Excluding nearly one in ten Australians will ensure a loss of capacity and significant economic and social costs that all Australians will be paying for well into the future.

Dr Marcus Bowles (12 November 2010)  
Chair, Institute for Working Futures Pty Ltd  
Head Office, Dilston, Tasmania 7252

## **Operators of Dilston Tourism Business concerns**

As operators of boutique accommodation — and we are only one of many tourist businesses in this great valley — our business relies on fast internet service for the vast majority of our bookings.

We have just invested significantly in a new website, extended our internet marketing and, in the real world, completed an additional guest suite. The decision to do this was based on the belief that we are successfully filling a niche in providing a wanted service, and it was reasonable to expect continued growth of our business over the coming years.

However if we do not keep up with our competitors, in relation to speed and accessibility of our web marketing and bookings, then we will certainly be significantly disadvantaged. This is in spite of our business being totally e-enabled. We stand to lose substantial business, through no fault of our own, when potential guests will spend time on faster websites and consequently bypass our slower service.

Carl Gledhill and Helen Hale

**The River House**, 39 Rostella Road, Dilston, Tasmania 7252

[www.riverhouselaunceston.com.au](http://www.riverhouselaunceston.com.au) // [stay@riverhouselaunceston.com.au](mailto:stay@riverhouselaunceston.com.au) // <http://tamarvalleydelights.blogspot.com>

## **A local specialist small business operator comments**

I own a small electronics design and manufacturing business on the Tamar River in Northern Tasmania. Four years ago, we relocated to Tasmania to benefit from the better quality of life here. This was only made possible by having good fast internet communications, as all of our business is transacted on-line.

As the size of the business grows and the complexity of the large design files we need to send interstate and overseas also grows, we are relying ever more heavily on fast broadband speeds.

Teleconferencing is particularly challenging at the moment as the bandwidth of current infrastructure is totally inadequate. Another area we find difficulty in is remote video monitoring and remote PC control, which is sometimes necessary in software support situations.

We are also currently completely unable to host a server with current broadband and this will also be impossible with the proposed wireless connection.

We are concerned that if our area is not connected to the fibre network, the ever increasing demand for bandwidth will reach the inherent bandwidth limits of the wireless coverage sooner rather than later, and leave us again in a remote communications backwater, thereby stifling the economic growth potential of this area.

Ron Brown

**Sentinel Systems**, 349 Windermere Road, Windermere, Tasmania 7252

The NBN plan is for 93% of premises to be connected with high-speed fibre-optic cable, 4% with wireless network coverage, and the remaining 3% with satellite.

The East Tamar is currently **excluded** from the 93% to be connected by FTTH.

**While the stated national target is 93%, we believe as much as 15-20% of Tasmania will be excluded from FTTH.**

## **It's a matter of urgency**

We understand that the planning and design phase of any major project often takes longer than the construction phase.

Because of the overall size of the project affecting this region alone, our '**Get Connected**' residents committee believes it is vitally important that a decision in favour of a fibre-optic cable be made as soon as possible.

The alternatives offered, namely wireless and satellite, are subject to numerous adverse factors that we understand will prove almost impossible to completely 'engineer out'.

2014 is only three years away. There is an urgent need for an agreed plan.

It is understood that we have only a **six-month window** to modify the current decisions.

**'As taxpayers we have every right to demand equal opportunity regarding the NBN – don't forget, along with everyone else, we're paying for it. As the rest of the country moves forward why should we end up worse off than we are now?'**

**An irate resident sums up local feeling**

## **PREMIER DAVID BARTLETT'S PLEDGE:**

*The Mercury* SUE NEALES | July 31, 2010

[http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2010/07/31/162591\\_tasmania-news.html](http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2010/07/31/162591_tasmania-news.html)

**PREMIER David Bartlett has pledged not to let Tasmanians living in rural and regional areas miss out on the high-speed digital revolution.**

His commitment coincided yesterday with new maps showing large parts of the state may never receive superfast internet and phone connections under the Federal Government's \$43 billion National Broadband Network project.

**But Mr. Bartlett said if the Federal Government could not cost-effectively connect Tasmania's smaller towns to the optic-fibre cable, the State Government may step in.**

This would use state funds to pay for a broader network in Tasmania than the Federal Government intended.

More than 4000 houses in Smithton, Scottsdale and Midway Point have become the first in Australia to be offered connection to the NBN grid.

The Premier said his aim was to connect every home, business, school and hospital.

**He said that if the first NBN rollout fell short of his vision to make Tasmania the 'most connected place on the planet', the State Government and the private sector would work together to bridge the gap.**

The NBN maps claim 93 per cent of Australians can hook up to the optical cable in the next six years but large areas of Tasmania including Stanley, Strahan, Oatlands, Kettering, Dover, Mole Creek, Campania and Lilydale are left out.

Instead, these towns and vast areas of the Midlands, Derwent Valley, Bruny Island and Tasman Peninsula will rely on satellite or wireless internet.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard admitted yesterday that though NBN connections would have internet speeds of 100 megabits per second, satellite and wireless options would not exceed just 12Mbps -- but it was still more than 20 times higher than most rural and regional users had at present.

The maps confirm fears expressed last year that towns with fewer than 1000 residents could be excluded.

Last year, Mr Bartlett specifically promised country towns 'like Tunbridge and Kempton' would be included in the NBN roll-out and that only some tiny towns with fewer than 50 residents would miss out.

The NBN rollout maps show that though the optic-fibre runs alongside the Midland Highway, most towns en route including Ross, Kempton, Tunbridge and Oatlands will not be connected to it.

But Mr Bartlett said: 'There is other investment still to be made. We will head deeper into smaller towns, we are pushing for a ubiquitous network.'

State Opposition broadband spokesperson Michael Ferguson said: 'First, Mr Bartlett says towns like Tunbridge and Kempton will get the NBN from the Federal Government and now, when he finds out they won't, he says the state will pay for it.

'He created expectation towns like this would be supported. Now we can see that is not the case.'

**Former Premier Bartlett replied that this was the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. We wish to remind the Government of that pledge to all Tasmanians.**

**We ask the new Premier to deliver on this pledge.**

**This is our mission. And we want confirmation NOW.**

**On behalf of the residents of Dilston, Windermere, Swan Bay, Hillwood and Mount Direction**

**Regional residents are asking questions.**

**Political representatives are also asking questions**

When he raised the issue in Parliament on 19 October 2010, Greens Member for Bass, **Kim Booth MP**, said:

The Premier says the NBN is an innovative solution to overcome the isolation of island Tasmania, but by leaving the Tamar Valley off the list he is relegating residents and businesses to a technological backwater in which they are condemned to life in the slow lane, which will translate as slower growth and lower investment.

**Malcolm Turnbull MP**, in a speech to Parliament on 26 October, said:

The fact is that everybody in this House, I am sure, is committed to the availability of fast broadband at affordable prices across Australia. We all recognise that there are areas where that is not the case, in particular in regional and remote Australia . . . The NBN is not going to give [some of] them fast broadband—they have apparently been left out—and yet, when you think of an appropriate destination for Commonwealth funds, an appropriate destination for Commonwealth investment in this area, surely those remote regions are the ones that should be prioritised. But they apparently are not going to be.

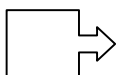
**Ivan Dean MLC, Independent Member for Windermere**, raised the issue of the timing of the NBN rollout with regard to the East Tamar communities on Wednesday 17 November 2010.

My **question** is to the Leader. The NBN is going to be connected to the UTas campus at Mowbray and residents at Newnham as part of stage 2 of the NBN rollout. The growing areas of Dilston, Windermere and Swan Bay are approximately 2 kilometres north of this rollout but are not scheduled for NBN rollout until the implementation of phase 4 or 5, which will mean a wait of four to six years. If NBN returns the service as espoused, the businesses in this region will be significantly disadvantaged. What is the criterion for the rollout of NBN within the State, what criterion is applied when determining each phase of the rollout - phases 1, 2 and 3 - and why would an area such as Dilston, Windermere, Swan Bay be identified for connections as late as phase 4, which could well be five or six years hence?

On 11 November, **Kerry Finch, Member for Rosevears**, asked this Question Without Notice, **directed to David Bartlett, Leader of the Government**:

- 1) Is the Government monitoring the needs and concerns of Tasmanian communities as the National Broadband Network is established?
- 2) Is it aware that many residents will miss out on high speed broadband and will lose landline telephone services after 2014?
- 3) Is the Government aware that residents, like those at Dilston, in the Tamar Valley will have to make do with patchy and much slower wireless services, although less than 10 minutes from central Launceston?

***Get Connected* thanks our local Members for their ongoing support in what is becoming an issue with an urgent timeline.**



## SECTION 2 – QUESTIONS THAT NEED ANSWERS: CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY

### Extracts from the NBN website

The NBN Stage One rollout has come in on time and under budget in Tasmania, and NBN Co has learned a great deal from this project.

#### *Get Connected asks:*

**If it is under budget, why won't FTTH be extended to communities like ours?**

NBN Co also stated: '...NBN Co is committed to thorough processes of consultation with the community as we roll out the network.'

**So why is there no facility for any kind of dialogue with NBN Co on its website?**

(The NBN Co. website doesn't even list contact information.)

In relation to its agreement with Telstra, NBN Co said: 'We also expect to dramatically reduce the NBN's revenue risk with the Telstra Heads of Agreement outlining the decommissioning of the copper access network as the fibre network is rolled out.'

On 18 November 2010 **Stephen Conroy**, in his address to Parliament, announced:

A new entity, USO Co, will be established to take responsibility for the delivery of the Universal Service Obligation and other public interest obligations. This recognises that the provision of wholesale services nationally by NBN Co will result in significant changes to the industry's structure, which in turn affects the way USO voice telephony services in particular need to be delivered.

As well as having the regulated responsibility for delivering USO voice telephony services, USO Co will have responsibility for delivering:

USO (public interest) payphone services:

Ensuring the continuity and ongoing maintenance of the copper network for premises in the last 7% - in effect, those premises that are not connected to the fibre network;

Emergency call handling functions and the National Relay Service; and

Ensuring that public interest services, such as traffic lights and public alarms are seamlessly migrated to the new network.

USO Co will deliver these responsibilities through contracts, initially with Telstra. The detailed terms of these contracts are being discussed at present. In addition to the Government's substantial contribution to funding USO Co, which benefits the industry as a whole, the residual costs incurred by USO Co will be met through industry funding which will replace the current Universal Service Obligation and the National Relay Service levy schemes.

***Get Connected asks:***

**Will our East Tamar communities receive confirmation that our copper landlines will be retained?**

**If so, will government confirmation be provided to our communities that USO Co must maintain and upgrade our existing copper landlines to meet our needs?**

**An extract from the NBN Co website:**

***Wireless***

While the specific technology used to provide wireless broadband services varies, each service provider uses radio frequencies to transmit and receive data between customers and a local transmission point. Normally, this requires a number of base stations, similar to mobile phone towers, which transmit to customers who have a small transmitter/receiver connected to their computers or other digital devices.

***Get Connected asks:***

**Who will provide these transmitter/receivers and at what cost?**

**Can East Tamar communities be guaranteed improved mobile phone quality, in an area renowned for dropouts and poor signal reception?**

NBN Co. refers to **'the Telstra Heads of Agreement outlining the decommissioning of the copper access network'**. **Yet Stephen Conroy says *USO Co will ensure*** 'the continuity and ongoing maintenance of the copper network for premises in the last 7%'.

**Get Connected asks:**

**Which of these two seemingly contradictory statements is correct?**

**To add further to the confusion:**

*The Australian* reported (9 December 2010):

The (NBN) spokeswoman said rural residents without access to the NBN cable would still be able to use their existing phone lines, under a deal with Telstra to maintain its copper network in non-fibre areas for 10 years from July 2012.

But when asked if residents could lose access to their existing internet services, she replied that individual providers would decide whether to maintain or scrap them.

**Get Connected asks regarding the copper network:**

**If this statement is correct, who will pay for this ten-year contract?**

**And what will happen to the copper network after 2022? Will it be decommissioned then? If it is still operational, who will undertake responsibility for maintenance and upgrading?**

**Get Connected asks in relation to existing internet services:**

**How can we establish which individual providers will maintain them in our area?**



## \* Sources

Dilston 166 Dwellings, Population 463

Windermere 107 Dwellings, Population 236

Swan Bay 107 Dwellings, Population 267

Hillwood 240 Dwellings, Population 532

Mt Direction 77 Dwellings, Population 192

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**Connect to NBN now or pay up to \$300 for phone line**  
<http://www.theage.com.au/atechnology-news/connect-to-nbn-now-or-pay-up-to-300-for-phone-line-20101015-16ms3.html>

*The Mercury*, October 07, 2010 (Michelle Paine)  
**Plan to put all Tassie on NBN**

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**Towns to miss NBN link**  
[http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2010/07/31/162591\\_tasmania-news.html](http://www.themercury.com.au/article/2010/07/31/162591_tasmania-news.html)

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