

National Broadband Network Taskforce

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National Broadband Network Panel of Experts Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
CANBERRA ACT 2601

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Submission from:

Dr Richard Caladine
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Dear Panel,

Re: Broadband and Australia's economic success

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission for this extremely important project.

This government has indicated its commitment to higher education as one way to invest in the human capital of the citizenry and thus ensure Australia's role and economic success in the global arena. The University of Wollongong has six campuses in the southern coastal region of New South Wales. Many students utilize the Education Centres at Bega, Batemans Bay, Moss Vale and the campuses at Wollongong, Shoalhaven and Loftus. However, as most students have commitment to work or family that impact on their available time for study they take advantage of Wollongong's online learning offerings.

For five years the University of Wollongong has been providing audio and video files of lectures and learning materials to students via the internet. Today the files can be streamed, podcast or downloaded from the University's learning management system. Initially the files were only available as streams which created an inequity of access between students that could access the files from home and those who could not. Often the student who could not access streamed files from home were in remote, rural locations and while many were connected to the Internet the bandwidth was insufficient for the slimmest file. The introduction of downloadable files allowed students to download files at the nearest campus or centre and take them home. However, this only partially offset the inequity.

If all students had physical access to broadband at home and if the cost was subsidized or removed the inequity would be effectively removed. This would enable students, no matter where they are located to freely take part in media-rich communications with colleagues and teachers, to interact with media rich resources and to collaborate.

Further, free or subsidized broadband for students would encourage many who are currently marginalized by their locations to take up higher education thus enhancing the nation's capacity to perform in the global economic and social arenas.

I am happy to discuss this submission with the panel at its convenience.

Yours truly

Richard Caladine