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28 March 2008

Ms Patricia Scott  
Chair  
National Broadband Network Panel of Experts  
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy  
GPO Box 2154  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Ms Scott

I write in response to the request for public comment on the *National Broadband Network* invited by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

The Sunshine Coast Regional Council (the 'SCRC') is the local government authority for the Sunshine Coast region located in South East Queensland. The SCRC was formed through the amalgamation of Noosa Shire, Maroochy Shire and Caloundra City Councils, effective 17<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

The SCRC is pleased the Australian Government is committed to the development of a world class sustainable next generation national broadband capability and I take great pleasure in advising the panel that Council has already made significant steps towards this outcome in partnership with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

The SCRC is currently implementing two projects with the support of the Clever Networks ISD Funding program (Maroochy Clever Networks Project and the Cooroy Knowledge Precinct Project). These two projects combine Wimax Wireless and Fibre Network components under Open Access arrangements and are generating a very positive response from the educational, health, government and business community. Council is currently investigating avenues to extend this network across the region and within new commercial developments to meet the level of interest.

Prior to the formation of the SCRC, the three Sunshine Coast Councils (Maroochy, Caloundra and Noosa) supported the Council of Mayors (SEQ) in seeking the assistance for *Broadband Connect* funding in 2007 to establish a next generation, fibre optic customer access broadband network of 50+ Mbps throughout the South East Queensland, under the banner of ConnectSEQ. There was strong State political support for a local government-owned, carrier neutral, open access model to finally bring the infrastructure-based competition in digital content and on-line services to businesses and residents of the region. ConnectSEQ was seen to provide an innovative, scalable and cost effective opportunity to provide a significant subset of the Australian population with the necessary technology to be competitive at a global scale.

I believe Local Governments are ideally placed to deliver infrastructure to the community, given their expertise in planning, development processes, construction and access to land easements. The provision of next generation broadband capability, I also understand, aligns well with the community, economic and regional development priorities of most, if not all Councils, in both urban and rural areas.

Council's experience in consulting with property developers suggests the majority of greenfield sites could be provisioned with Fibre to the Premises infrastructure on a voluntary basis in favour of local government or a ConnectSEQ-type entity. National consistency in building codes would facilitate this and move us beyond the current model whereby only basic copper wire telephone services are provisioned into developments.

For the roll-out of new customer access networks into brownfield sites, there are three main options. Firstly, Fibre to the Node with continued use of the copper network; secondly, Fibre to the Wireless Access Point, for example WIMAX; thirdly, Fibre to the Premises. The combination of these delivery services is necessary in the short term, however Fibre to the Premises, should be the long-term goal.

A key benefit of connectSEQ's high capacity and scalable trunk network is that it will be able to pervasively deliver 100 megabit per second to multi-gigabit per second bandwidth into schools, educational institutions and health facilities across the South East Queensland footprint, which covers the nation's fastest growing region.

The Sunshine Coast region has demonstrated that it is prepared to work with all levels of government and the community to deliver upon the national policy objective of delivering a next generation network under Open Access terms. This region has made a very positive start and looks forward to the opportunity to further work with the Australian Government.

For sustainable telecommunications industry development, including competitive customer access networks, steadfast, consistent and unambiguous open access arrangements must be implemented. Without this key tenet, the industry will not have confidence to invest and the net result will be a higher cost to the taxpayer with an inferior and unsustainable *National Broadband Network* program result. Regulatory certainty is also a fundamental component to facilitate sustainable market place development, effective competition and maximum consumer benefit.

I would appreciate your consideration and feedback of these comments, and Council looks forward to further information on opportunities under the *National Broadband Network*.

Yours sincerely



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ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
SUNSHINE COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL