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Home > A Forum on the Future of Australia's NBN

A Forum on the Future of Australia's NBN

[Mark Gregory](#) ^[1]

RMIT University

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Abstract

The future of the \$51 billion Australian National Broadband Network (NBN) remains unknown, with the Government still to commit to a course of action after the current build phase. Industry representatives have recently voiced their concerns about a potential future sale of the NBN and how this would occur. In response, the Telecommunications Association is hosting a public forum on the future of the NBN on 31 July 2019 at RMIT University. Papers in the June 2019 issue of the Journal include discussion on consumer interest in 5G in New Zealand, the history of Australian mail handling and technical papers covering a range of interesting topics. This month we include a paper titled Measuring Digital Inequality in Australia: the Australian Digital Inclusion Index that provides an important insight into digital inclusion. The Journal welcomes further contributions on telecommunications and the digital economy.

A Forum on the Future of Australia's NBN

The Telecommunications Association is hosting a forum on the future of the NBN at RMIT University in Melbourne on 31 July 2019. More details can be found on the *tel/soc.org* website.

The National Broadband Network (NBN) is Australia's largest Government-funded infrastructure project, which is anticipated to cost the taxpayer about \$51 billion by the time it is built and fully operational in 2022.

The NBN is about the future, vital infrastructure that will underpin the nation's future participation in the global digital economy. For the younger generations, the NBN is a key Government contribution towards successful careers, innovation and wealth creation.

The NBN has been controversial, in its inception and with the change by the Coalition Government to the multi-technology mix approach in September 2013. For the telecommunications industry, the NBN has been an important step towards a fair, open and competitive telecommunications market through the provision of uniform national wholesale bitstream products.

Last year, the *Journal* published a paper titled *Australian Wholesale Telecommunications Reforms* (Gregory, 2018 ^[5]) that takes a look at the future ownership options for the NBN and how there are a number of interlinked policies and regulations that would need to be reviewed and updated, depending on the approach taken by the Government to proceed with retaining or selling the NBN, either as a single entity or by separating access technologies.

Now that the NBN is approaching the end of the rollout, attention is turning to what happens next. Recently, the new Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Paul Fletcher stated that the NBN would not be sold to Telstra or a company linked to Telstra. Further clarification was provided by the Government that this was a preliminary view and that a decision on what would be done with the NBN would be taken at some point in the future. Broadly, there remains no support in the telecommunications industry for Telstra or a wholly owned subsidiary company, e.g. a restructured InfraCo, to become a future owner of the NBN.

What should be done with the NBN? The Telecommunications Association is hosting a public forum on the future of the NBN to provide a venue for debate on the different approaches that might be taken by the Government after the 2022 Federal election. It is anticipated that there will be a range of views, some of which are at the opposite ends of the spectrum.

If you have an interest in the future of the telecommunications market, then this forum is a must attend.

In This Issue

In this issue of the *Journal* papers cover public policy, improvements in telecommunications technology, digital inclusion, 5G in New Zealand and a historical look at mail handling.

The Australian Mail Handling Scene presents two historic papers from 1966 detailing the mail handling scene in Australia and the development of the state-of-the-art Sydney Mail Exchange.

A Cluster-Driven Energy Routing Protocol for Optimal Network Lifetime in Ad Hoc Networks proposes PEGADyn – a hybrid version of Power-Efficient Gathering in Sensor Information Systems and Dynamic State algorithm for a new energy-efficient routing protocol in ad hoc networks.

Implementation of RF Band-Pass Filter on UMTS Systems to Improve Quality of Service proposes that an RF band-pass filter device be implemented on UMTS systems to reduce high interference and reports on a trial installation in Indonesia.

Energy-Efficient Network Protocols for Domestic IoT Application Design investigates the gathering of data from household IoT-enabled devices, the associated energy cost and the impact of different communications technologies and protocols on that cost.

Dynamic Vehicular Traffic Load: Definition and Quantification proposes a method that quantifies the amount of traffic over time by the help of a cloud calculation service and vehicular communication.

New Zealand Consumer Interest Growing for 5G Mobiles summarizes results from a survey of the New Zealand mobile market by Venture Insights in October 2018. The survey had over 1,000 respondents, all of whom were responsible for making their mobile purchasing decisions, with a representative spread across New Zealand, all adult age groups, and customers from the three major mobile service providers.

Measuring Digital Inequality in Australia: the Australian Digital Inclusion Index describes the development of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, its architecture and the dataset used to populate it.

The *Journal*, Looking Forward

The *Journal* welcomes papers on telecommunications and the digital economy, including theory, public policy and case studies.

Technological change is happening at a rapid rate and consumers anticipate that governments and industry keep pace to ensure that the benefits can be fully utilised. The *Journal* is calling for papers on how new technologies – especially 5G –will affect Australian telecommunications consumers.

The topics of *International Telecommunications Legislation and Regulations* and *International Mobile Cellular Regulation and Competition* are set to continue for some time, as the opportunity to attract papers from around the globe continues. We encourage papers that reflect on where the global telecommunications market is now, how it got to where it is, and what is going to happen next.

Papers are invited for upcoming issues. With your contributions, the *Journal* will continue to provide readers with exciting and informative papers covering a range of local and international topics. The Editorial Advisory Board also values input from our readership, so please let us know what themes you would like to see in future issues.

All papers related to telecommunications and the digital economy are welcome and will be considered for publication after the double-blind peer-review process.

Mark A. Gregory

Reference

Gregory, M. A. (2018). Australian Wholesale Telecommunications Reforms. *Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy*, 6(2), 1-34. <https://doi.org/10.18080/jtde.v6n2.155> [6]

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NBN

Editorial

Editorial

[11]

[12]

[12]

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Links

[1] <https://telsoc.org/journal/author/mark-gregory> [2] <https://telsoc.org/journal/jtde-v7-n2> [3] <https://www.addtoany.com/share?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftelsoc.org%2Fjournal%2Fjtde-v7-n2%2Fa196&title=A%20Forum%20on%20the%20Future%20of%20Australia%E2%80%99s%20NBN> [4] <https://telsoc.org/printpdf/2496?rate=ZfpMB7fE9KROBI6Y7OYcWzteVg1MqLcKcalgxQREI> [5] https://telsoc.org/journal/jtde-v7-n2/a196#Gregory_2018 [6] <https://doi.org/10.18080/jtde.v6n2.155> [7] https://telsoc.org/sites/default/files/tja/pdf/196-article_text-2040-1-11-20190716-final.pdf [8] <https://telsoc.org/copyright> [9] <http://doi.org/10.18080/ajtde.v7n2.196> [10] <https://telsoc.org> [11] <https://telsoc.org/taxonomy/term/36> [12] <https://telsoc.org/topics/editorial>