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Submitted by Peter Gerrand on Wed, 29/04/2020 - 11:12

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Summary: The NBN Futures Project, initiated by TelSoc members in February 2019 (latterly renamed the TelSoc Broadband Futures Group), aims to develop policy options by early 2021 for the post-rollout NBN, to help meet Australia's needs for broadband infrastructure in the following decade. The project team has run three public forums to date and generated ten peer-reviewed policy articles published in the Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy.

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The NBN Futures Project began as an idea put forward at the TelSoc Journal's Editorial Board in February 2019: that the options for the future ownership and enhancement of the National Broadband Network should be researched and debated in a systematic way, through public lectures and policy articles published in the Journal.

This proposal was enthusiastically supported by all present, who held a series of subsequent meetings to work out project objectives and plan actions. In the course of these, additional TelSoc members and others with useful skills and knowledge were invited to join the project.

On time frame, it was decided to develop, by early 2021, some well supported policy options that might influence both of the major political parties in the lead-up to the forthcoming federal election. Best endeavours are being made to **seek bipartisan support for the project's recommendations**

To help develop these ideas it was decided to hold a series of public policy forums, under the TelSoc banner, and to transform as many of the presentations as possible into papers of record, published in the TelSoc Journal (the *Journal of Telecommunications and the Digital Economy*). The Project Team also made a submission^[3] (under the TelSoc banner) in January to the federal Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the NBN, to alert relevant political advisors to the existence and potential of this project.

The first NBN Futures public forum, held at RMIT University (courtesy of Mark Gregory) on 31 July 2019, concentrated on examining the options for eventual ownership of the completed NBN. Chaired by John Burke, it included presentations by Peter Gerrand, Jim Holmes, Graeme Samuel AC and Michael Cosgrave (ACCC). Here is Leith Campbell's overview^[4] of that Forum.

The second NBN Futures public forum, held at RMIT on 22 October 2019, focussed on realising the user potential of the NBN. It featured presentations by Teresa Corbin (CEO, ACCAN), Chris Wilson (on the Australian Digital Inclusion Index) and Murray Milner (on the New Zealand broadband market experience). Once again, Leith has provided an overview^[5].

Details on the broad scope of the project as at December 2019 can be found here^[6].

The third NBN Futures public forum, *Learning from International Experience*^[7], was held on 25 February 2020, again at RMIT, featuring Richard Ferrers (on OECD comparisons) and Murray Milner (on lessons from the successful New Zealand Ultra Fast Broadband program), with discussion from Jim Holmes (Incyte Consulting). Here is Leith's overview.^[8]

To date this project has provided the following benefits to Telsoc's members: three public forums, free to TelSoc members, in the past nine months; four Journal articles published in September 2019 from the July 2019 forum; three Journal articles published in December from the October forum; and three Journal articles published in March and June 2020 from the February forum.

Any future forums are likely to be held by teleconference in the second half of 2020. These will be advised to TelSoc members.

Project Membership: Active members of the NBN Futures Project, in alphabetical order, have been: Trevor Barr^[9], John Burke^[10] (convenor), Leith Campbell^[11], John Costa^[12], Richard Ferrers^[13], Peter Gerrand^[14], Andrew Hamilton, Peter Hitchiner^[15], Tim Herring^[16], Jim Holmes^[17], Allan Horsley^[18], Murray Milner^[19] and Craig Watkins^[20].

Source URL: <https://telsoc.org/blog/nbn-futures-project>

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