Converging on an NBN Future
- Content, Connectivity, and Control

Tuesday 9th Oct 2012, Clive Price Suite, University of Canberra

ABSTRACTS

SPEAKER : Robin Eckermann (Robin Eckermann & Associates)
PRESENTATION TITLE : Don't Get Hung up on the Plumbing!

Fibre all the way to the end-user represents the ultimate in "future proofing" last-mile bandwidth, and the NBN is eagerly anticipated in many areas of the community. However, network infrastructure is little more than "plumbing" to eliminate speed limits that most Australians won't challenge any time soon!   Transforming the way we live, work and play depends much more on digital literacy, the availability of relevant and affordable services and the ability to embrace new approaches. Holding back on the challenges that these pose until the NBN arrives is a recipe for slipping behind rather than getting ahead.

SPEAKER : Keith Besgrove (Dept of Broadband, Communications & the Digital Economy)
PRESENTATION TITLE : Using the NBN to Improve Government Service Delivery

With a geographically dispersed population, governments in Australia face unique service delivery challenges. The National Broadband Network is transforming the way governments can deliver services to households and businesses, complementing traditional brick and mortar institutions with more efficient and easy to use online services and community engagement. The Australian Government has set a goal that by 2020 four out of five Australians will choose to engage with government online. To help achieve this, we are rolling out health, education and local government initiatives in early NBN rollout areas to begin the service delivery revolution

SPEAKER : Gerard Goggin (University of Sydney)
PRESENTATION TITLE : The NBN Will (Not) Be Televised: Internet, Mobile Media, and the Future of the Audiovisual

The National Broadband Network (NBN) promises to be an important moment in the history of television in Australia. With the potential to fully support broadcast of television and other audiovisual content, the NBN represents a fateful moment in the long heralded convergence of Internet and television.   However, it is still unclear what forms television will take on the NBN — and how our great twentieth-century nation-building project will relate to pre-existing ventures such as the digital television transition, liberalisation of communications market, and media convergence, let alone the complex affair that is audio-visual content distribution across the current wide variety of digital media platforms.

Accordingly, in this paper, I discuss the visions for TV over the NBN — and how these relate to the emerging trends in television and audio-visual content distribution in Australia. In 2011-2012, especially, we are in the midst of contradictory logics in television. On the one hand, television has retained a strong grip on Australian audiences. On the other hand, viewers are consuming and interacting television across a diverse ecology of media devices, applications, and platforms. In this the role of mobile media in the convergence between Internet and television is now becoming increasingly significant. But is there sufficient recognition as yet of the complementary relationship between the NBN and mobile media — especially when it comes to the enormously popular area of television and audiovisual material? Is there really a huge gulf between the brave new world of NBN, and the already existing realms of everyday mobile Internet and mobile media? If so, how should we go about bridging the gaps, in the interests of media producers, audiences, and policymakers alike?

SPEAKER : Matthew Allen (Curtin University)
PRESENTATION TITLE : Selling the NBN: The Politics of Broadband in Australia

It is nearly 20 years since the report of the Broadband Services Expert Group gave the first clear sign that the Australian government was beginning to engage in public policy relating to networked-computer based services. There is still nothing like the high-speed dedicated broadband infrastructure and service supply which was enthusiastically imagined by that group (along with many similar groups in other countries from the late 1980s onwards). The 'National Broadband Network', evocative of these early times of optimism and future promise, slowly rolls out and will probably not be complete until the next decade. The return on this investment, while sure to come, will be many more years distant. Throughout this time, of course, broadband has grown dramatically in Australia (dependent, of course, on one's definition of just how broad the band needs to be). There would be only a handful of the population which still dial up to connect and for many more, the concept of a 'fixed' high-speed service makes little sense as mobile connectivity grows even faster than traditional broadband. It would appear we have broadband and we do not, all at the same time. We also have, compared with earlier times, sharp division between models of broadband service provision, offered by both government and opposition. In this environment, selling the NBN becomes both a political and economic necessity, even as the gap between desire and access (which first motivated the NBN) shrinks. What then are the politics at work here? Why are now in doubt about something which has been promised for so long and whose announcement was first met with such acclaim?

SPEAKER : Lesley Osborne (ACMA)
PRESENTATION TITLE : Communications literacy and the broadband society

The rollout of the NBN highlights the continuing importance of communications literacy strategies especially in groups where current use is low (such as those over 65 years) and where there are often heightened concerns around safety and security. Developments in service provision associated with the NBN, including government services, will increase the importance of being online for these Australians and being confident in undertaking a range of activities. Communications literacy will also become more essential for those Australians whose work and business involves being online, as access to fast broadband opens up new commercial opportunities. Research indicates that like their fellow Australians, many small business people lack confidence and technical skills in using digital media, although they recognise their business needs an online presence. The ACMA's experience with its national cybersafety education program, Cybersmart, provides examples of resources targeted to the evolving engagement of young people online. In developing awareness and education programs for diverse groups in the wider community there is no 'one size fits all'. Differences in how adult Australians use digital media, the type of risks encountered and existing skills and confidence must be considered in communications literacy strategies as we move towards a broadband society.

SPEAKER : Geoffrey Heydon(Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation)
PRESENTATION TITLE : Ubiquitous Broadband is Enabling the Digital Economy

By 2020 the term "digital economy" will be unnecessary, just like the term "broadband" will soon be superfluous. Our challenge is to shift today's economy to this future state where "digital" is the default and the systems and processes of today are gone forever.
I will discuss three dimensions of the emerging digital economy. 1. Devices hiding complexity with less focus on web browsers and more towards applications. 2. The shift in generational behaviour moving social tools from the consumer towards business and vitalising content which are drivers for cloud computing and, 3. The ubiquity of both fixed & mobile connectivity underpins the national information infrastructure.

SPEAKER : Gwang Jae Kim (Hanyang Cyber University, Korea) & Sora Park (University of Canberra)
PRESENTATION TITLE : Reflection of Broadband Policies in South Korea

Korea has been one of the most successful markets in broadband connectivity. Since most policies were aimed at achieving high penetration and infrastructure, even the demand side was often pictures only in terms of encouraging computer use, low price broadband service and service. Less emphasis was made on the delicate nuances of motivation, attitude and digital media literacy of the users. Emphasizing the demand-side of broadband connection, we demonstrate the gaps in existing policies suggest a new framework for examining user adoption with a gradated approach.

SPEAKER : Tony Eyers (Tektel)
PRESENTATION TITLE : Explaining the NBN – Public Perception of a Technology Vision

Less than 100000 NBN subscribers are expected by mid 2013. Hence public perceptions of the NBN during 2013 (an election year) will be guided by the media rather than actual NBN service experience. We examine online NBN information, how it may be perceived by lay audiences, and suggest alternate online methods for raising public NBN awareness.

SPEAKER : Sean Casey (NBN Co. Limited)
PRESENTATION TITLE : NBN Co - Building Broadband for Content, Connectivity and Control

In this presentation a brief update on the NBN CO. will be presented. NBN Co will provide a progress update on the rollout, share pilot applications from early release sites and discuss future opportunities for a connected country.

SPEAKER : Franco Papandrea (University of Canberra)
PRESENTATION TITLE : The NBN as a Public Policy

The NBN has been at the centre of passionate public debate ever since it was first mooted. However, much of the debate has tended to be dominated by sentiment and preconceptions about anticipated benefits with supporters hailing the policy as visionary and nation building and detractors labelling it a white elephant in the making. Curiously, what is the largest infrastructure project ever undertaken in Australia has attracted very little objective analysis of the kind that is typically regarded as being indispensable to the evaluation of major policies. Using standard policy evaluation tools, the presentation will briefly review the NBN policy and some of the major claims of its proponents and detractors.

SPEAKER : Catherine Middleton(Ryerson University)
PRESENTATION TITLE : An International Perspective on the NBN

Australia's NBN is the subject of much international interest. While international observers (like many in Australia) are often quick to note concerns about the high costs of the network build and low takeup rates to date, less attention has been paid to comparing the underlying business model for broadband deployment in Australia with that of other countries. This presentation will discuss the rollout of next generation broadband infrastructure in Canada and the United States, offering a comparison of business models and demonstrating a stark contrast between the NBN model of public infrastructure development and the North American model of private sector provision of internet connectivity.