Key issues

- NBN and the Australian Digital Economy
- Mobile communications
- Consumer experiences
- Telecommunications and Indigenous Australians
Regional Australia and the Digital Economy

• Genuine desire across regional Australia for access to faster, more affordable and more reliable broadband services.

• The digital economy involves harnessing widespread broadband to improve the delivery of health, education and local government services, and growth in local economies.
Satellite Broadband

- Still uncertainty about what will be able to be achieved over the NBN Co satellite service.

- To help address this, we recommend that case studies should be developed to demonstrate the range of applications that can be used over satellite technology.
Digital Economy Planning

- A strategic approach to participating in the digital economy.

- People should not be waiting for the NBN rollout in their areas in order to participate in the digital economy.
Mobile Communications

• Considered essential for people to run businesses, to encourage tourism and growth, and to have reliable communications in emergency situations.

• The mobile phone coverage footprint is approaching, or has largely reached, the limits of commercial viability.
Extending Mobile Coverage

• The cost of deploying mobile base stations in rural and remote areas is high.

• Construction of towers in regional areas for the NBN’s fixed wireless network presents an opportunity to improve mobile coverage.

• Recommend a co-investment program with an emphasis on priority regions selected with community input.
Consumer Issues

• Regional Australians have consumer issues that are much the same as those living in urban areas
  — customer service issues
  — problems with contacting service providers
  — problems with complaint-handling
  — lack of consumer awareness.
Consumer Safeguards

• In transitioning to the NBN environment, there are concerns about losing existing consumer safeguards.

• Safeguards encourage providers to:
  — supply reliable services quickly
  — restore faulty services promptly
  — address recurrent faults
  — provide quicker responses to people with life-threatening medical conditions.
Indigenous Communications

• Telecommunications can provide significant improvements to the economic social participation of Indigenous Australians.

• Key barriers include:
  1. limited access to good telecommunications services
  2. low levels of digital literacy.
Indigenous Communications Program

• Recommend the continuation of the Indigenous Communications Program.

• It should include tailored, localised training solutions and recognise the increasing use of mobile devices among Indigenous Australians.