Australian Broadband Advisory Council— Terms of Reference

July 2020

Purpose

With the National Broadband Network (NBN) nearing completion and the rollout of 5G underway, it is important to develop strategies to maximise the value of high speed ubiquitous connectivity in Australia. Driving take-up and promoting the use of the NBN, 5G and other networks could significantly improve productivity across key sectors of the Australian economy.

The Australian Broadband Advisory Council (the Council) will examine and identify how to maximise the economic and social benefits of ubiquitous broadband connectivity including through increased take up and use of NBN and 5G. It will provide advice and recommendations to the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts (the Minister).

Function and Scope

The Council will provide advice and recommendations to the Minister on:

- ways in which the NBN and 5G can be used to lift Australia's economic output and the welfare of Australians more generally
- opportunities to increase the use of the NBN, 5G and other broadband networks, including by small and family businesses
- barriers to using the NBN and 5G, including financial and cultural/behavioural issues and cost effective strategies to reduce such barriers
- potential implementation, communication and outreach strategies
- any other matters identified by the Minister, from time to time.

The Council will develop digital connectivity strategies for the agriculture, education, tourism, media and digital content, and health sectors.

These strategies will include:

- a gap analysis (including an assessment of the suitability of the current suite of NBN enabled products and services and other complementary technologies for that sector)
- consideration of the benefits of increased take up in the sector in terms of productivity
- ways in which further take up of the NBN and 5G can be encouraged
- other opportunities in that sector to support improved connectivity
- a framework for setting targets and measuring and evaluating progress.

The strategies will be developed in consultation with key stakeholders in these sectors, including the relevant portfolio Ministers (through the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts) and their agencies through sub-groups to be established for each sector.

The Council will have regard to:

- work underway relating to maximising the benefits of the NBN, 5G and other networks, and digital technologies more broadly
- the role of agencies such as the Digital Transformation Agency and the Australian Data and Digital Council, the Digital Technology Taskforce, and relevant state and territory organisations
- the activities and advice of the 5G Working Group including as to particular use cases as these are identified.

The Council may identify research, analysis or other tasks which could usefully be undertaken by the working groups. However, tasks with significant resourcing demands (such as complex third party advice or quantitative research) may need to be scoped, costed and assessed in the context of the competing government priorities.

The Council will have regard to NBN Co's Statement of Expectations. The Council will not advise on NBN Co funding or the detailed operational and commercial decisions of NBN Co, or other operators.

Working Groups

Sectors

Over time, Working Groups will be established for each sector to support the work of the Council including the analysis of the opportunities and barriers for the use of the NBN and 5G and assisting in the development of the resulting strategies.

At least one member of the ABAC will be appointed to each Working Group.

Working Groups for Education and Agriculture will be established initially, working in cooperation with the Department of Education, Skills and Employment, and the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment respectively.

5G Working Group

The 5G Working Group will be reconstituted as a sub-group of the Council, to provide advice on 5G as a new broadband platform and possible 5G use cases. This will help the Advisory Council consider the use of better broadband in a more integrated fashion, noting the complementarity of fixed and mobile broadband services.

Membership

The Minister will appoint members to the Council for their expertise and understanding of communication, technology and relevant sectoral issues. Membership will also have regard to geographic diversity and gender balance.

The Council will comprise a Chair selected by the Minister, and up to eight other members. The appointment term will be for a period of two years. Members are eligible for reappointment. The Minister can terminate a Council member's appointment at any time, including where there has been a breach of the terms of engagement.

Other industry or government officials may be invited to meetings as guest speakers or observers where appropriate. A representative of the 5G Working Group may attend meetings of the Advisory Council at the invitation of the Chair.

Administrative arrangements

Administrative support and operational costs for the Council will be provided by the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. This includes secretariat support, arranging meetings and meeting administration costs such as venues, accommodation, teleconference facilities, travel and catering.

Remuneration

Members will be paid a daily fee in line with rates in Table 2A 'Other holders of part-time public office' in the Australian Government Remuneration Tribunal determination for part time office holders 2019, or subsequent updated determinations, and reimbursed for travel and accommodation costs in line with relevant Tribunal determinations.

Meeting arrangements

The Council is expected to meet up to three times a year either face-to-face or via video/teleconference, with additional meetings as required. In the absence of the Chair, a nominated member will chair meetings. The quorum for a meeting will be two thirds of the appointed members.

Agenda and work program

An agenda and papers will be circulated to all Council members prior to the meeting. If additional items are proposed for discussion after the agenda is finalised, this will be resolved by the Chair.

The secretariat will prepare a summary record of the meeting, including action items. The record will be circulated to members following the meeting. Discussions between the Minister and his Council are confidential. Minutes from Council meetings will not be published.

The Council's work program will be decided between Council members and the Minister following the initial meeting.