

Opening Statement

NBN Co – Senate Estimates – February 2023

Introduction

Good evening senators

Firstly, I'd like to thank the Chair and the other Members of the Committee for facilitating this video conference appearance tonight.

We take our appearances at Estimates very seriously, but a number of company commitments prevented us from being in Canberra tonight. As such, we are grateful for the Committee's understanding and flexibility.

Joining me tonight are Kathrine Dyer, our Chief Operating Officer; Gavin Williams, Chief Development Officer for Regional and Remote and Will Irving, our Chief of Strategy and Transformation.

Time is short tonight, so I will keep these remarks very brief, but I just want to start by emphasising the importance of fast, reliable broadband.

The nbn network is the connective tissue for our economy and our society.

It connects students to teachers, customers to businesses, employees to their work, patients to their doctors, and it connects friends and family, wherever they are in the world.

A national broadband network with near ubiquitous access right across one of the largest countries on Earth sets Australia apart and this can only be good for our economy, for regional communities, and for all of us in our daily lives.

But technology is moving fast and we need to make sure that the network continues to meet the growing and changing digital needs of people right across Australia.

Operational Updates

Fibre connect

That is why we are moving quickly on our Fibre Connect program to push fibre deeper into the network, making our highest residential speeds available and delivering the reliability of a fibre to more people.

Yesterday we announced the latest suburbs and towns where more than 1 million additional homes and businesses currently served by Fibre to the Node will be able to upgrade to Fibre to the Premises on demand.

Once construction is complete in the suburbs and towns announced yesterday, customers will be able to order a higher speed service which will trigger a fibre upgrade.

There are now more than 1.3 million FTTC and FTTN premises that have progressed through design and construction and we are seeing a strong flow of orders for fibre upgrades in these areas.

We remain on track to make **nbn's** highest residential wholesale speed tiers available to 90% of the fixed-line network by the end of 2025.

Fixed Wireless and Satellite

We are also making good progress on the \$750 million investment with the Australian Government, designed to deliver significantly faster speeds for many in regional Australia.

In early October, we enabled more than 1,000 homes and businesses in the satellite footprint that do not have an nbn connection to be able to move into our Fixed Wireless footprint.

These customers can now order an nbn Fixed Wireless service via a participating retail service provider.

We are aiming to migrate even more premises from Satellite to Fixed Wireless over coming months and we are on track to deliver this program by the end of 2024.

SSBI

A fortnight ago, I joined the Minister for Communications and the CEO of The Smith Family for the launch of the Australian Government's *School Student Broadband Initiative*.

This is a great example of how nbn is working to lift the digital capability of Australia.

There are nine Retail Service Providers signed up to this initiative to provide a year of free broadband to up to 30,000 Australian families with no internet at home.

We are also working closely with State and Territory education bodies, charities and community organisations, who will identify eligible families and support them to access this service.

SAU

Finally, I want to mention our ongoing work with the ACCC and industry on the Special Access Undertaking, or SAU.

The SAU sets out, among other things, the regulatory framework governing nbn's prices over time and how costs can be recovered.

It is very important, in fact vital, that the balance is right so there is sufficient revenue to continue investing in the network to support the needs of Australian homes and businesses well into the future.

On 29 November last year we lodged with the ACCC our SAU variation and supporting materials. If this variation is accepted by the end of March, we are fully committed to implement new wholesale prices by 1 July. If it is accepted after the end of March, we have committed to implement within three months of that acceptance date.

The ACCC is currently inviting industry feedback on our SAU variation.

We look forward to continuing to work constructively with the ACCC, retail providers and consumer advocacy groups towards the acceptance of the proposed variation.

Conclusion

Chair, thank you again for facilitating the opportunity to appear virtually tonight and for time afforded to make these opening remarks. With that, my team and I are happy to take questions.