

CommsDay Summit 2025

CEO keynote by Ellie Sweeney

Sydney, 18 June 2025

Good morning everybody.

It's great to be back at the CommsDay Summit and to be together again on Gadigal land.

I would like to start by acknowledging the custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

I am delighted to be here today.

I'm delighted, to be among so many colleagues, our many valued Retail Service Provider partners – as well as industry peers – for what is always a fabulous event.

On that note, **thank you** and congratulations to Grahame and the whole CommsDay team. Thank you for the long-standing diligence and drive that you bring to covering Australia's telco sector.

And of course for last night – nbn was honoured to be in such esteemed company and the recipient of three awards, and I'd like to acknowledge that.

Once again, we have started the year with significant weather events impacting many communities, with the recent flooding in parts of New South Wales and Queensland, as well as the drought conditions affecting parts of southern Australia.

While it's now largely out of the headlines, recovery efforts are nonetheless still underway in **many places** and many **people** still have a long and difficult road ahead of them.

I know I can speak for our entire industry when I say they have our full support through these tough times.

I am constantly impressed, that when the community is in real need - whether it's flood or fire, drought or storm - **our sector rallies** together to support each other and to support the communities we serve and are a part of.

If you are not part of this industry, it is sometimes easy to overlook how integral and now fundamental the services we provide are to Australians.

Whether it's discrete everyday transactions like paying for your weekly shop, or entire essential systems like water, energy, transport and health, they all have one thing in common – they rely on the critical digital infrastructure that **we**, as an industry, work hard to provide.

I am sure you would agree - this is a huge responsibility. But it is also a very special privilege, and a massive opportunity.

And that's where I would like to focus my remarks today.

So while this is not my first time speaking at a CommsDay Summit, this is my first speech here as the nbn CEO, so I want to share my thoughts **on nbn** – not just the things we **are** doing, but **why** we are doing them.

Today I'd like to focus on three key points:

1. Firstly, I would like to **share the investments nbn is making** to build the critical network Australia needs, not just for today, but for tomorrow, **and for decades to come.**
2. Secondly, I would like to highlight the **value those investments are creating** for Australia. Australia needs, deserves and indeed demands reliable, resilient, future-ready, high-speed network with enhanced security - **and it's our job, with RSPs, to provide it.**
3. And finally, as the pace and scale of change continues to accelerate, and as demand for data and connectivity grows exponentially, I'd like to look ahead and **share how nbn has begun to re-imagine its own future.** There is no doubt we are at an inflection point for the industry, so I would like to share some of the

thinking we are doing as we focus on what a ‘North Star’ for what a future-ready nbn might look like.

Investing for Australia

At nbn, our story is one of national purpose and nation-building centred around a commitment to deliver the digital infrastructure that supports how Australians live, how we work, and how we connect — not just today, but long into the future.

We operate with a clear mandate: to lift Australia’s digital capability. That mandate is anchored in the Government’s Statement of Expectations — but our purpose goes much further. We are the backbone of Australia’s digital economy and a **driver of** national productivity, inclusion, and resilience.

In other words, we look to elevate Australia by connecting people and powering progress.

And we are evolving.

As our nation’s digital demand accelerates - we are investing in faster speeds, greater reliability, and a future-ready network that’s inclusive of customers right across Australia — whether it’s rural and remote, regional and metro.

The average Australian household now has more than 25 connected devices, and that’s up from just two or three a decade ago. By the end of this decade, that number is expected to explode to more than **60 per home**.

And it’s not just more devices — it’s what **we’re doing** with them.

The average home now uses 10 times more data than it did a decade ago — and that will likely double again in the next five years as Australians rely more on digital services for work, education, healthcare, entertainment, security and daily life.

Fibre: the foundation of the future

At the core of our investments is fibre.

Fibre is at the heart of our long-term strategy — because it delivers greater reliability, more capacity, and even greater speeds. Fibre optic cable remains unparalleled in its performance, and nbn is proud to invest prudently and efficiently in this critical infrastructure for the benefit of the nation.

Today, 84 per cent of Australian homes and businesses — equating to 9.6 Million premises — are gigabit-capable¹. That number will reach more than 10 Million by the end of this year.

By the end of 2025, we will have enabled FTTP upgrades for 5 Million premises currently served by legacy copper² — pushing gigabit-capability³ to more than 90 per cent of the country.

Just last month, Fibre to the Premises surpassed Fibre to the Node to become the leading nbn connection technology for Australian homes and businesses — and that's reflecting both the direction of our investment and growing customer demand for higher speeds and greater reliability.

Fibre is now the dominant technology in our network. And this means fewer dropouts, almost limitless capacity potential, less maintenance, and for nbn, it is the most sustainable, energy efficient and scalable technology to meet Australia's connectivity needs for today and for decades to come.

¹ Regardless of the retail service a customer purchases, the actual wholesale speeds delivered by NBN Co's highest residential wholesale speed tier of 500 to close to 1000 Mbps will be less than 1 Gbps due to equipment and network limitations and the peak information rate may fall anywhere in this range. Reference to speeds are not customer speeds; they are wholesale layer 2 peak information rate bandwidth provided to retail providers. A customer's experience, including the speeds actually achieved over the nbn® network, depends on some factors outside NBN Co's control (like equipment quality, software, and how a Retail Service Provider designs its network) and the NBN Co technology used for the connection.

² Such as FTTN/C

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And we're not done.

With funding of up to \$3 Billion from the Australian Government and a further \$800 Million from nbn, work is now underway to upgrade⁴ the remaining Fibre to the Node premises on legacy copper⁵.

That's not just a technology change — it's a capability uplift and it will enable a superior digital experience for hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses right across Australia, more than half which are located in regional areas.

Beyond fibre: building a truly national network

Our network doesn't stop at fibre.

Significant upgrades to our HFC network — which serves around 2.5 Million premises — mean HFC customers can now access our highest residential wholesale speed tiers of close to 1000Mbps download and 50Mbps upload⁶.

Our investments will also help increase the ongoing reliability and resilience into the future of HFC.

HFC customers will also be among the first to benefit from our upcoming speed acceleration program – which we are calling “Accelerate Great”. Come 14 September of this year, HFC customers will be among the first to have the option of upgrading to **2,000 down** and 100 up speeds, when made available to them via participating Retail Service Providers.

⁴ <https://www.nbnco.com.au/corporate-information/media-centre/media-statements/upgrades-for-remaining-homes-businesses-on-fttn>

⁵ Such as FTTN/C

⁶ Regardless of the retail service a customer purchases, the actual wholesale speeds delivered by NBN Co's highest residential wholesale speed tier of 500 to close to 1000 Mbps will be less than 1 Gbps due to equipment and network limitations and the peak information rate may fall anywhere in this range. Reference to speeds are not customer speeds; they are wholesale layer 2 peak information rate bandwidth provided to retail providers. A customer's experience, including the speeds actually achieved over the nbn® network, depends on some factors outside NBN Co's control (like equipment quality, software, and how a Retail Service Provider designs its network) and the NBN Co technology used for the connection.

We've also delivered major upgrades to our Fixed Wireless and Satellite networks — both completed on time and on budget. These upgrades are helping to lift the digital capability in regional and remote areas, delivering faster, more reliable broadband to communities where full fibre isn't available.

We've built a network with a solid foundation — and we're preparing it for the future.

Speaking of the future, we continue to progress in the procurement of a Low Earth Orbit Satellite service — ahead of our Sky Muster GEO satellites **reaching end of life in the early 2030s**. As one of Australia's Statutory Infrastructure Providers, our responsibility and commitment is to ensure people right across Australia can access reliable, high-speed connectivity.

Infrastructure is only part of the story.

Our social licence is built on these investments — but it is sustained by our culture.

When I'm asked to describe the culture of nbn, I say it can be described best in three words — professional, **purpose-led, and outcome-focussed**.

I've seen it in every corner of the business, and reflections of it in every conversation I have with our people.

Our people act with purpose and ownership. And, like me, people work at nbn because they believe in, and care deeply about, our purpose, what we do and why it matters. And they fundamentally want to make a meaningful difference in people's lives – and so we are!

Creating value for the country

The investments I have just outlined are, in and of themselves, impressive but it's only when you consider the **value** that Australians get from our network every day that you realise just how critical nbn infrastructure truly is.

And we never stand still.

That is why on the 14th of September this year, we will launch our Accelerate Great program.

In partnership with our RSPs, we will be increasing wholesale speeds on some of our existing tiers and introducing new multi-gig speeds into the market to bring significantly faster speeds to residential, business and enterprise customers.

For Australia's digital economy, and our connected way of life, we believe that customers will increasingly request faster upload and download speeds.

Speed that will help improve the experience of real-time collaboration, cloud-based work, video conferencing, and content creation.

Speed that are also be key to unlocking the real potential of emerging technologies like virtual healthcare, cloud gaming and immersive education.

Accelerated speeds are a leap forward for the nbn network, for participating RSP's, and they mean we can support Australian homes and businesses to meet the data demands of a digital-first way of life, today and into the future.

I want to recognise and thank our RSP partners for the excellent work they are doing with us, including testing the new Network Termination Devices and jointly educating customers and the market on what is coming so we execute well together, and as an industry, in September.

Now, as I think about big steps forward.....I'll ask you to travel with me, if you will, back to 2011.

- Instagram had just turned one.
- Game of Thrones premiered on pay TV.
- And we were all obsessed with this thing called "Angry Birds".

But perhaps more importantly for this audience, the nbn rollout commenced.

In 2011, the average household broadband speed was around 8 Mbps.

By the end of this year, it is expected to be more than 10 times that!

And by the end of this year, more than 10 Million homes and businesses will be capable of accessing nbn's fastest speeds.

So, why does this MATTER?

Because our research⁷ estimates a higher capacity, lower latency and faster nbn network will not only improve GDP by around \$400 Billion by the end of this decade but also drive **productivity** across the economy.

The same research points out that for every 1 Mbps of speed added to the network there is a 0.04% improvement to GDP to help bring that to life – that's a nearly \$1 Billion dollar uplift to our nations GDP for every megabit per second of extra speed.

That impact is also disproportionately felt across the regions, where the GDP benefits are up to 16 times greater compared to metro areas.

And in supporting our most disadvantaged communities, who see up to five times the GDP uplift from fast broadband when compared to more **advantaged** areas.

So, Accelerate Great is about so much more than just speed.

It's about turning investment into impact.

Innovation into inclusion.

And infrastructure into opportunity – for the economy, for communities, and for every Australian home and business we serve.

Our 'North Star' and rethinking nbn for a hyper-connected Australia

So – to my final point of today.

There is a fantastic and very powerful conversation underway within our organisation, around what nbn and our network must look like in the years ahead.

⁷ <https://www.nbnco.com.au/corporate-information/media-centre/media-statements/accenture-economic-modelling-reveals-gdp-benefits-of-faster-stronger-nbn>

If the past decade has shown us anything, it's that **adaptability is one of nbn's greatest strengths** - to adapt and to innovate as expectations, technologies and demands have evolved.

So too has our ability to respond with purpose and with innovation.

I like the quote attributed to Churchill: "**The further backward you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.**"

Over the last decade, together with this industry, I am sure you would agree that we have done some really impressive things together. For example:

- Between 2012 and 2022, we've enabled \$122 Billion in GDP uplift.
- We have seen a 44 Mbps increase in average broadband speeds.
- We have created 169,000 additional jobs and supported the creation of 87,000 new businesses.
- And today, we have 12.6 Million premises are able to connect to our network, and of those 8.6 Million homes and businesses are already experiencing the value of the network.

Through moments of national change and challenge - and when Australians needed to stay connected – nbn, together with our RSP partners, has delivered.

Whether it was through Covid, where almost 40% of people using the nbn worked from home and more than 4 Million students shifted to online learning.

Or through the 10x increase in telehealth consultations, and the 77% of people using nbn who accessed telehealth or online medical information.

These same people reported the network positively impacted their health outcomes, an effect not surprisingly amplified in regional and remote areas, where proximity to health care and health professionals can be a challenge.

I would like to think we are humble, but we are also incredibly proud that nbn has been central in supporting Australia's **economic growth, social inclusion and national resilience.**

And now, as we peer ahead into our digital future – it's clear that Australians everywhere have rapidly changing needs and growing expectations when it comes to their connectivity.

Those changing needs and expectations will ALL depend on ultra-fast, resilient, and ultra-low latency network connectivity...

...For the next generation of video conferencing, for live HD game streaming and for real time file syncing.

...For smart access and security systems, smart energy control systems and home secure Network Attached Storage applications.

...For emergency alerts, for drone-based crop monitoring, argi-tech and agri-tourism.

...For smart robotics, for AI assistants and for eye tracking interfaces.

...And for the myriad of amazing use-cases that AI will enable.

At nbn – our mission will be to meet these demands working with you, our industry partners, to deliver a brilliant experience for our customers.

We will always be guided by our Statement of Expectations from the Government – to deliver fast, reliable and affordable connectivity to drive national productivity, social inclusion and equitable access.

As I have mentioned, we will need to work collaboratively across our industry, with nbn continuing to deliver our highly capable network and last mile connections.

We will also need to work with industry to focus on effective and capable in-home experiences and the take up of appropriate plans and services for our customers.

So – when we at nbn look ahead, we see a pathway to some North Star milestones:

We see the majority of customers experiencing 100 Mbps or above⁸.

⁸ The reference to speed is to nbn's applicable wholesale download speed tier

We see 500 Mbps⁹ as the most popular plan choice for customers.

We see Australia moving up the global table of fixed broadband speeds.

We see the customer and RSP experience simplified and digitised — where the number of manual interactions are halved, driving Net Promoter Score improvements, and delivering seamless, digital-first service.

We see USO reform, with a fit-for-purpose regulatory framework.

We see nbn reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.

And we see nbn as a sustainable Government Business Enterprise, reinvesting in the nation's digital future.

We, as a team at nbn, are so excited about the next chapter.

And we look forward to partnering with you to seize the opportunities ahead and to help uplift our nation's productivity, leading all Australians into a connected digital future.

Things we can agree on

I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks today how impressive it is when our sector works together.

Clearly there is competition in this market, and I mean it when I say a competitive landscape is vital for Australia's resilience, national security and telecommunications industry.

We won't always agree on everything but there are also very many things I think we **can** all agree on.

We **can** all agree that moving Australians off aging copper – and providing them with access to gig or multi-gig speeds on fibre, HFC, and to high speeds on Fixed Wireless can only be a positive for society.

⁹ The reference to speed is to nbn's applicable wholesale download speed tie

We **can** all agree that full fibre, and the benefits of our Fixed Wireless upgrades and HFC investments, are a generational opportunity for a change to the customer experience, and these unlock enormous economic, productivity and social benefits.

We **can** all agree that we need to work together at a time when 95 per cent of customers do not realise their in-home set up can affect their internet experience, so to educate customers on how to get the most out of their connectivity.

And we **can** all agree that a telco sector fit for the future needs to be brilliant at connectivity but also brilliant at collaborating and partnering to create more value from our investments.

Our shared opportunity now is to help Australian homes and businesses take advantage of this unique moment of generational change. And we need to go beyond just connectivity to do that.

Conclusion

Allow me to conclude with my three main points today.

Firstly, nbn is investing in Australia's Digital Future --- for **all Australians**. And nbn will be investing billions to ensure our fibre, HFC and Fixed Wireless networks are providing exceptional value to customers for generations to come.

Secondly, our investments are fundamentally about creating value for Australia. Telecommunications plays a major role in delivering productivity in this country and has a strong legacy in doing so.

And finally, as the digital age continues to evolve and technologies like AI drive extraordinary transformations, nbn has just begun to re-imagine its own future to ensure we continue to deliver for our industry, and for all Australians.

Collectively, we must never lose sight of the fact that digital advancement has never been about the technology – it's always been about the benefits it can bring, the possibilities it enables and the difference it makes to people's lives.

Thank you for your time this morning, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the Summit.