

## **Senate Estimates Hearing CEO Opening Statement**

**Thursday, 27 March 2025**

Thank you Chair and the Committee for accommodating us via video conference.

Joining me this evening is our Chief Financial Officer, Philip Knox; Chief Customer Officer, Anna Perrin, Chief Network Officer Dion Ljubanovic; and Chief Development Officer for Regional and Remote, Gavin Williams.

As I provided an update just over a month ago, I will share a brief business overview and our response to Ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred.

As outlined in our Half Year results for FY25, nbn remains on track financially. Earlier this month, we raised A\$750 million in our latest domestic Green Bond issuance, bringing our total Green Bonds in domestic and international markets to A\$7.4 billion, further demonstrating investor confidence in the nbn.

We are delivering on our important purpose which is to lift Australia's digital capability. We do that by providing fast, reliable, affordable services which aim to meet the current and future needs of Australian households, communities and businesses.

The nbn is critical digital infrastructure, impacting the lives of Australians daily. More than 20 million Australians used around 48 billion gigabytes of data in 2024, across more than 390,000 kilometres of fibre optic cable, 345,000 square kilometres of Fixed Wireless footprint and around 7.7 million square kilometres of Satellite coverage across mainland Australia, Tasmania, and our remote islands.

We continue to enhance our network with upgrades to ensure people, right across Australia, gain the benefits of faster speeds, fewer interruptions, more reliability and capacity.

We remain on track to complete upgrades that will enable 5 million additional homes and businesses to access full fibre by the end of December 2025. And we're about to embark on upgrading the last 622,000 premises off legacy copper networks.

Fibre provides the highest speed and capacity of any technology, delivers the most consistent experience, is the most efficient network to operate, the most resilient technology to weather, and will position the nbn network to meet customer demand for decades to come. I am pleased to report that Fibre has now become the prevalent technology in our fixed line networks.

A Fibre network means fewer drop outs, less faults and less truck rolls, reducing our environmental impact and our operational costs, and improving network viability and the overall sustainability of the company.

Beyond fibre, we are also upgrading the capabilities of our HFC network which now serves around 2.5 million homes and businesses across the country.

And we were pleased to see the ACCC's latest Measuring Broadband Australia report note that our Fixed Wireless upgrades are now providing average wholesale download speeds for Fixed Wireless Plus plans available on that network of 99.8 Megabits per second during all hours in December 2024, up from 47.4 Megabits in December 2021.

Nowhere do we see the example of the criticality of the nbn network, and the benefits of fibre, more than with the recent Ex- Tropical Cyclone Alfred which impacted Queensland and Northern New South Wales.

Our biggest risk to the nbn network during a natural disaster is the resilience in the commercial power networks.

Full fibre connections have less reliance on the power grid and so are less impacted by outages. We see less damage on the full fibre network following a natural disaster, so service restoration times are shorter, making fibre a more resilient technology.

In preparation for the cyclone, we deployed generators to maintain and restore connectivity in the event of power loss, flood impact or network damage. We also safely mobilised satellite trucks, portable satellite kits and field workforce to impacted areas.

At the height of its impact, approximately 378,000 services experienced an outage, with 2,269 nbn network sites affected. Most outages were due to loss of mains power, with some network damage, including at least 68 Fibre to the Node sites and some HFC network impacted.

We deployed a total of 43 generators, mainly supporting Fixed Wireless towers.

During the event, 79 Disaster Satellite Services provided free high-speed broadband through a Wi-Fi access point at evacuation centres, community hubs and emergency service facilities helping displaced residents stay in contact and supporting first responders.

In this context, we welcome the Australian Government's announcement this week regarding continued investment for emergency connectivity in regional Australia. This announcement will include funding for up to 500 additional community wi-fi sites, as well as extending these critical services at the 1,068 existing sites across Australia, under the Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (or STAND) program.

Our network provides critical infrastructure to the community and our priority is to work closely with authorities, electricity distributors and emergency services to respond to events, minimise network disruption and restore impacted services quickly and safely.

On 11 March we announced a Cyclone Relief Fund of up to \$7 million to support eligible retailers in providing financial assistance to affected households and businesses.

The impact of ex-tropical Cyclone Alfred has reinforced the importance of strong, resilient infrastructure. Our investments in expanding full fibre are critical for a more durable and reliable broadband network.

I extend my thanks to the nbn emergency management team as well as our delivery partners involved in this response.

Finally, we have a strong commitment to an ongoing dialogue with our current and potential customers, and with a range of industry stakeholders such as retailers, consumer advocacy groups, governments and regulators.

We appreciate the ongoing involvement of our stakeholders in our consultations, most recently as part of nbn's Replacement Module Application process under the Special Access Undertaking framework, and encourage further and ongoing participation as we continue toward the next Regulatory Cycle.

Together in partnership we can help to expand on our connectivity foundations to lift Australia's digital capability and meet the current and future needs of households, communities and businesses.

Thank you Chair, we are now happy to take the Committee's questions.

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