



TOWONG SHIRE
COUNCIL

Pure

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Broadband Connect

Towong Shire Sumbission

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Date: January 10, 2006.

Towong Shire Council is located at the base of the Snowy Mountains and at the headwaters of the Murray River in North East Victoria on the border of New South Wales.

I would like to take this opportunity to lodge a submission to the Clever Networks and Broadband Connect funding programs and also to reiterate some of the main points that I conveyed upon my visit to DCITA on the 20th of December 2005.

The main items that I would like to make comment on are as follows.

1. ICT Strategic Plan

The Towong Shire has spent considerable resources in establishing its ICT Strategic Plan. This plan has been in development over the past two years in conjunction with Industry and Community. The strategy is aimed at providing a roadmap to ensure that future Telecommunication Infrastructure investment is part of a combined approach to leverage Investment from Industry and Government to ensure flow on benefits are achieved for our communities.

It is the committee's opinion that all future funding for both broadband connect and clever networks be distributed in conjunction with the Regional Plan.

2. Non Proprietary Infrastructure

It is the committee's opinion that for the funding to achieve the best results in terms of encouraging competition, it is recommended that Open Standards and Non Proprietary Systems be a requirement for all future Infrastructure Investment.

3. Focus on Economic Development Outcomes

It is the committees opinion that funding criteria be centred around achieving Economic Development Outcomes. The Towong Shire ICT Strategic Plan is focused on increasing Business, Industry and Community awareness of opportunities that are available to increase business productivity and social equity through utilising Telecommunications and Technology. Next Generation Technology is integral to achieving Economic Development outcomes in Industrial, Commercial, Education, Health, Emergency Services and Residential Attraction. Therefore it is essential that a coordinated approach is deployed.

4. Establishment of Alternative Backhaul

As the only options for backhaul in the Towong Shire are Telstra Fibre and Satellite, it is viewed by the committee that the establishment of alternative backhaul link is essential in achieving a truly competitive environment. Community owned backhaul may be the most appropriate option where a strategic plan is in place and sustainable management systems are displayed.

5. Health, Education and Emergency Services

These areas are clearly an extremely important service that require state of the art technology and ones that when leveraged in conjunction with industry and community can enable a higher level of service delivery for all stakeholders.

However these services are not available in all towns within the Towong Shire and other Industry and Community groups may also be appropriate recipients of Infrastructure development funding. For example some Agricultural associated processing facilities within the

shire are in need of next generation technology. Their requirement would necessitate small business and residents to utilise any infrastructure development to provide a wider community benefit, in areas where health and education services are not available.

6. Demand Aggregation

The Demand aggregation program that has been run over the past 2 years has enabled our strategy to be developed with guidance. It is the committee's opinion that this program should be continued. In addition to this it is felt that an allocation of time (ie. 2 days per week) be allocated to our shire in order to further develop and implement our ICT strategic plan.

7. Community Owned Infrastructure

In areas like the Towong shire so many challenges are ahead of us in the pursuit of equitable Telecommunications services. Some of these include Small population (6,000 people), Large land area (6,000 sq km) and challenging topography. The concept of Community owned infrastructure is one that could present opportunities for the Towong Shire and its communities to take control of its needs in the environment of a privatised Telstra. It is anticipated that through the strategic planning process that the required skills would be identified within the community.

Thank you for the opportunity to make comment.