



Media Release

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Wireless claims not supported by facts

Recent claims that “the rise of mobile internet through smartphones and tablets threatens to make the NBN a waste of money” and “out of date” were not supported by the facts, NBN Co said today.

Chief Technology Officer Gary McLaren said the latest internet data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics in fact proved the opposite.

“There is no question that Australians love smartphones and tablets but the vast bulk of Australia’s internet usage – some 92 per cent - is carried over fixed line connections.

“The proportion of mobile handset downloads over mobile networks is estimated to make up just 1.4 per cent of total internet downloads in Australia. Other wireless broadband technologies account for just 6.6 per cent.

“The eternal problems associated with spectrum scarcity – such as mobile congestion and a hefty price premium placed on using such a limited resource – are not going to go away. They may help explain why over the past 12 months the average amount of data being downloaded over mobile devices per subscriber per month grew by only six per cent.

“By contrast, average fixed broadband data usage in the same period grew by more than 80 per cent.”

According to Mr McLaren, better fixed line infrastructure was essential to ease the load placed on mobile networks.

He pointed to a recent Informa study of 200,000 smartphone users in six countries that showed that on a global basis nearly 70 per cent of data usage on smartphones was over Wi-Fi rather than mobile networks. Wi-Fi generally relies on a fixed line network to connect to the internet.

“Fixed lines remain the engine-room of downloads in this country and around the world. As data-heavy applications such as video become more prevalent there will be an increasing need for robust fixed connections such as the NBN,” Mr. McLaren said.

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