

## Stephen Rue keynote - West Tech Fest 2023

### Opening

Good afternoon, it's wonderful to be here with you all today.

I would, of course, like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the various lands on which we meet today, and any First Nations' People participating in this event.

I feel privileged to be speaking at what has been the nation's leading tech and innovation festival for over a decade.

I'd like to congratulate Curtin University, backed by the Western Australian and Federal Governments for bringing together leading businesses and opinion leaders to discuss all things tech, business, trade and start-up.

I'd also like to acknowledge Western Australian Minister Stephen Dawson, Perth Lord Mayor Basil Zempilas, and Nicole Lockwood, Chair of Infrastructure WA, proud West Australian and **nbn** Board member.

This is my third trip to Perth in the past 12 months, including a visit of the entire **nbn** Board where we visited key **nbn** infrastructure sites including our Waroona

Satellite Ground Station, the Food Innovation Precinct of Western Australia and Pawsey Supercomputing Centre, both supported by **nbn** fibre.

As well as being a gold sponsor of this event, **nbn** is proud to partner with the Western Australian Government on 'The Challenge' – which has been set up to create new solutions for healthcare delivery in remote communities across the Pilbara region through high-speed internet access.

## **Australia's fast growing digital needs**

We live in a technology-enabled and connected world, and the opportunities are endless.

Going back to our early years, NBN Co was set up to help deliver secure, reliable, high-speed broadband to people right across Australia.

There is no doubt that ubiquitous broadband is helping improve economic welfare and social equity for people across Australia.

It enriches people's lives by enabling access to online government services, education, health and connectivity.

Today, around 8.6 million homes and businesses across the nation are connected to the **nbn** network, which equates to approximately 20 million people relying on our network every day.

But the world is changing fast, with connectivity and digitisation driving rapid technological advances.

Demand is being driven by several factors, including the growing trend of people working from home, the widespread adoption of cloud computing and the proliferation of super-high definition video streaming and gaming.

Our network was built to evolve over time. And that time is now.

Now is the time for fibre. Now is the time for innovation. Now is the time for new business being created.

By investing in ongoing upgrades to the **nbn** network we want to ensure it is capable of supporting our nation's rapidly growing digital economy - and emerging technologies.

We will help enable future advances in technology such as virtual reality, generative AI and Internet of Things (IoT). And fibre has a key role in ensuring the network is more secure.

This is crucially important as the nation's reliance on the internet in everyday life continues to grow.

**nbn** is making the network future-ready by rolling out full fibre upgrades, which are designed to enable 10 million premises to access our highest speed of up to one gig<sup>1</sup> by the end of 2025.<sup>2</sup>

Fibre means better connectivity and reliability, growth of national prosperity and enhanced liveability.

Fibre plays a key supporting role in the creation of new jobs and upskilling the existing workforce to assist our nation in embracing a technological future.

*1. Regardless of the retail service you purchase, the actual speeds delivered by NBN Co's highest wholesale speed tiers of 500 Mbps 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. In addition, the HFC Home Ultrafast bandwidth profile downstream service provided to retail providers is a ranged profile with a maximum sustained information rate of 750 Mbps. Reference to speeds are not end user speeds; they are wholesale layer 2 peak information rate bandwidth provided to retail providers. An end customer's experience, including the speeds actually achieved over the **nbn**® network, depends on some factors outside our control (like equipment quality, software, and how your retail service provider designs its network) and the NBN Co technology used for your connection. 2. NBN Co provides wholesale services to phone and internet providers. **nbn**® wholesale speed tiers available to providers vary depending on the access technology in an end user's area.*

Fibre enables very fast internet speeds – both upload and download – to support remote work; in accessing company networks and video conferencing; for streaming of high-definition video and download and upload of large files, and as the name ‘fibre-optic’ suggests, being able to transmit data almost at the speed of light.<sup>1</sup>

Fibre enables local businesses to be more competitive on a national and even global stage - and to grow.

Fibre gives consumers more choice of higher speed plans, with more data, and a more reliable<sup>1</sup> and stable connection.

Fibre can help enable the use of more connected devices in the home at the same time, without a significant decrease in speed or quality of service.<sup>1</sup>

And as fibre can help enable faster internet – it supports people to access crucial online government services, like health and education, from the convenience of their own home.

1. Customer experience on **nbn**® full fibre (FTTP), including speed, depends on your internet provider, equipment quality and if you use the internet at peak times.

## Supporting West Australia with fibre upgrades

Western Australia is renowned for its science and innovation, particularly in the mining sector, where the use of automation, robotics and remote operations are blazing a trail.

Digital transformation and innovation are also driving advancements across the state - in space capability, renewables, improving health and wellbeing, the development of cutting-edge medical technology and growth in agriculture and aquaculture.

At **nbn**, we want to support all levels of government in Western Australia in their efforts to enrich lives, create jobs, boost the tourism industry, diversify the economy and support the start-up and innovation sectors.

In Western Australia, 900,000 premises rely on the **nbn** every day.

Prior to our copper to full fibre upgrades, 38 per cent of Fixed Line premises in Western Australia had access to download speeds of close to 1 Gbps.

By 2025, we expect 87 per cent of Fixed Line premises in the state to have access to close to gigabit speed.

There has been a pleasing increase in take-up of fibre upgrades in Western Australia in recent months, with a 50 per cent jump in orders.

We have increased our technician capacity in the state to deliver greater capacity of fibre installs.

## **Accenture**

This comes as research from Accenture, shows that the **nbn** network has been a game changer for Australia's businesses and households, particularly in remote and regional areas.

This Accenture modelling - which will be released in full soon - shows that higher average broadband speeds enabled by the **nbn** network have supported the creation of 132,000 jobs throughout Australia in the ten-year period from 2012 to 2022 – or equivalent to a 1 per cent increase in Australia's labour force.

Ongoing improvements to Australia's digital capability are expected to generate 88,000 new jobs and support the creation of an estimated 47,000 new businesses by 2030.

This will bring the total number of **nbn**-induced employment opportunities to around 220,000 jobs.

The research also found the economic impact derived from increases in average broadband speeds were 16 times greater in remote areas of Australia, and twice as profound in regional areas relative to the impact in major cities.

## **Supporting rural and regional communities**

And it's not just about upgrading copper to full fibre.

In partnership with the Federal Government, we are delivering on a \$750 million investment commitment to upgrade our Fixed Wireless and Satellite networks.

By the end of next year, Fixed Wireless customers will enjoy speeds of up to 400 Mbps.



And satellite customers will enjoy plans without data caps and faster speeds.

Finally, we at **nbn**, we are committed to supporting digital inclusion for families facing economic challenges and remote First Nations people.

We're proud to support the delivery of the Federal Government's School Student Broadband Initiative, or SSBI, which was set up to provide free **nbn** home internet for up to 30,000 families with school aged students who are not connected to services over the **nbn** network.

Last month, Communications Minister Michelle Rowland announced the program had been extended through until the end of December 2025. This is great news for eligible families who can also self-nominate for the program through the new SSBI National Referral Centre run by Anglicare Victoria.

The first families were connected at the start of the 2023 school year and there are now over 5,000 families signed up. I'm pleased to tell you that 371 Western Australian families are now connected to SSBI, with 49 more pending.

We have also rolled out 111 Community Wi-Fi points of presence across First Nations communities around Australia, enabling access to essential services such as telehealth, MyGov, online education and mentoring services.

24 of these free community Wi-Fi connections are located in remote First Nations communities in West Australia.

## **Closing remarks**

So in closing, it is crucially important to **nbn** that we partner with all levels of government, industry and business across West Australia in achieving their strategies and objectives, which are designed to support economic development.

We will continue to support the Western Australian Government's digital objectives – and as I spoke about earlier – we are rolling out the next evolution of our network – to open up our higher speed tiers.

By enabling access to fast, reliable and secure broadband<sup>1</sup>, we will help support the Western Australian efforts to invest in the economy, drive growth, invest in industries of the future and create jobs.

So again, thank you for your time and both myself and our **nbn** team here today – look forward to continuing to work with you all.

**ENDS**

*1. Customer experience on **nbn**® full fibre (FTTP), including speed, depends on your internet provider, equipment quality and if you use the internet at peak times.*