1. NBN thoughts

My position is just as an informed consumer – with an Honours degree in Computer Science from a Sydney University, followed by working for over 30 years in the IT (R&D) industry here in Australia. Although I’m not a telecommunications or networking expert, I have a reasonably deep appreciation for the technologies involved and the importance for the country.

I believe it’s quite clear to every unbiased person with an understanding of the technologies, that the whole thing became a ridiculous political football very early on, worthy of an episode or two of “Yes, Minister” or “The Hollowmen”. It’s very clear that while Labor’s plans may have been rushed and not thoroughly prepared, their basic approach was very sound; and it is equally obvious that the Liberal’s approach in contrast will be:

* Unreasonably limited in speeds – likely to be out of date by the time it’s “completed”
* Costly to run, as unlike the FTTH or FTTP plans, the local nodes that deliver the final leg of connectivity are not optical but require power, thus adding substantial costs to deployment and huge cost in ongoing maintenance down the years
* So inadequate that it is already encouraging competition – which for infrastructure *makes no sense.* Duplicate competing portions of NBN-quality networks make as little sense as duplicating sets of gas lines, power lines, water pipes or highways, for different groups of customers to use. The situation is looking set to be a repetition of the Telstra-Optus cable TV and cable internet rollouts. In other words, the government is making the same mistake that it allowed and encouraged Optus and Telstra to produce, within living memory.
Australia needs *one* high quality piece of national network infrastructure that forms the basis for commercialisation of services on top of that, and *which is technologically competitive at the international level.*

The history behind this, too – the privatisation of Telstra, a piece of public infrastructure, followed by the need to re-purchase the asbestos-poisoned nodes in that copper pipeline network – rubs salt in the wound. It’s like a triple tax on the Australian workforce.

We could do a lot worse than just taking the same approach that New Zealand is now pursuing. In fact, we *are* doing a lot worse than New Zealand, thanks to the embarrassing and ridiculous political lying that has surrounded the whole process. On top of that, once again ignorant politicians appear to be defaulting to a position of blindly copying whatever is done in the UK, rather than evaluating the technologies on their engineering and economic merits, and taking a long-term planned approach.

Watching politicians trying to make some short term political capital from something which is literally of national strategic importance is utterly depressing.

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