

# Australian Local Government Association – 2017 National General Assembly

Theme: Building Tomorrow's Communities

## Motion:

That this National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to implement an urgent review of the roll out of the NBN Fibre to the Node (FTTN) services and propose a revised back up power supply solution to overcome the loss of communications that will now be experienced during extended power outages.

*Sub-themes (select all applicable):*



**Governance – community driven planning and development**

(Question for consideration eg, what support do you need from the Commonwealth to improve the governance arrangements in your community?)



**Innovation – identifying and harnessing the key pillars of growth**

(Question for consideration eg, what support do you need from the Commonwealth to improve innovation within your community?)



**Liveability – maximising amenity, design and community cohesion**

(Question for consideration eg, what support do you need from the Commonwealth to enhance the liveability of your community?)



**Data driven public policy – using high quality data to grow the evidence base**

(Question for consideration eg, what support do you need from the Commonwealth to tap into big data and data analytics to provide greater insights into your community and to enhance decision making?)



**Social capital – improving the capacity of citizens and optimising workforce trends**

(Question for consideration eg, what support do you need from the Commonwealth to strengthen the social capital in your community?)



**Technology & infrastructure – identifying and investing in tomorrow's foundations**

(Question for consideration eg, what support do you need from the Commonwealth to allow your community to benefit from the smart cities agenda?)

**Background:**

As the NBN network continues to roll out across the nation, it has become apparent through engagement with the NBN Co via the Sunshine Coast District Disaster Management Group, that any home that has a fibre to the node (FTTN) solution provided will essentially lose communications and connectivity to the network, including phone connections, during an extended power failure. This represents a serious depletion in the security and safety of Australian communities.

Using the current copper wire telephone system provided by Telstra, residences and businesses can still make phone calls and be connected to the outside world during power failures, by connecting an older non powered phone. In instances of extended power failure, the FTTN solution will result in a loss of such connectivity and communications, even if the resident has a home generator, as the Node itself requires a power supply and the current design provides a limited power back up to the Node of around four hours.

This is an unprecedented loss in communications and security that is not widely known and has not been communicated to the general public. NBN Co has made it clear that they have no social charter to ensure continuous connection, and have cited the use of mobile phones as the modern back up communication tool.

This has three major flaws – firstly mobile phones themselves require back up power supplies and can drain quickly, often in a single day. Secondly, the mobile phone towers do not have secure power either, and often during large scale storms, will also drop out and result in wider power failures. Thirdly, many older Australians do not own a mobile phone.

The simple facts are that the copper wire network has saved lives when people in power failure situations have been able to make contact with emergency services in the event of a health issue during a prolonged black out. This communication security will be impaired with the FTTN solution.

**National Objective:**

An urgent review of the current design specification being rolled out by the NBN for FTTN is required.

The current design does not allow for any form of secure power backup and coverage for the Node boxes nor has there been sufficient communication to the community to advise of the change in communications security that the FTTN will create.

Further it is strongly recommended that the Federal Government enact a Social Charter for the NBN Co that places clear obligations upon the NBN to cater for all Australians and ensure ongoing connection security in the event of extended power failures.

**Summary of arguments:**

The NBN FTTN design solution is unsatisfactory. The loss of communications during extended power outages may well lead to a loss of life and represents a serious decline in the level of service for residences, from that which people currently receive under the existing copper wire network.

An urgent review needs to be undertaken and a revised specification should be implemented to address what is likely to be the unintended impacts of the FTTN solution. The review should include an examination of options for accessibility to further back up power supplies and the need for broader education for the community.

The Federal government also needs to enact a social a charter for the NBN to guide future decision making to protect the community during extended power outages.