

Day 1 - Opening session

Teresa Corbin: Good morning, everyone. Just checking you can hear me. My name's Teresa Corbin and I'm your emcee for our ACCAN Dollars and Bytes conference. Just a reminder to turn your mobile phones on silent. And also, just to note that we're using captioners and interpreters today, so if you're asking a question from the floor, while speaking at the podium, please speak clearly and slowly.

Our hash tag for Twitter today is #ACCANconf, and also you can find us on Facebook. Don't forget to "Like" and follow us if you've got any of your devices with you today. We've also got an Ideas Garden. So, on either side of the conference room, you can see a big piece of paper with a tree on it. There's little Post-it notes at the bottom. What we'd really like to encourage you to do today is to write your ideas about affordability down and stick them up on the board. Some of those ideas are already up there from our online forum - that's been going for the last month. Those ideas are going to be put forward to a panel of telcos at our Way Forward discussion tomorrow. So, without further ado, I would like to introduce the ACCAN chairperson, Johanna Plante, who's our very first speaker.

Johanna Plante: Thank you, Teresa. Good morning to you all. I'd like to firstly acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet - the Gadigal people and the Elders past and present. I'd also like to especially acknowledge our distinguished guests here today. We have a few - I don't have a list of them, but I know we have Claire Milne, who's come all the way from the UK to visit us especially for this conference and for some other input she's giving to ACCAN. On behalf of ACCAN... I apologise if I haven't mentioned any other distinguished guests that we have here today! I'm sure you're all distinguished, actually. I'll start going on now! No, that's OK... On behalf of ACCAN, I welcome you to our sixth annual conference, Dollars and Bytes - Communications Affordability Now and Tomorrow.

This conference gives consumers an opportunity to raise concerns with decision-makers whilst also allowing the decision-makers around government, telcos, regulators and content producers to hear consumer experiences firsthand. ACCAN's role as a conduit connecting the consumer voice with government and industry decision-makers is crucial to everyone. ACCAN conferences provide an excellent opportunity for everyone to come together, share perspectives, and discuss ideas in what we hope is an open, welcoming environment. I look forward to some lively debates over the next two days.

At the core of ACCAN's success in achieving outcomes for communications consumers has been the positive relationships we've built with government, regulators, industry, our members, and everyday consumers. Understanding all sides is critically important to finding constructive solutions to the challenges we face. Of course, affordability is one of the biggest of these challenges. And it's one of the main pillars of ACCAN's vision - communications services that are available, accessible and affordable for all consumers.

Affordability of communications products is an issue that affects consumers - all consumers - from young people to families and seniors. We're all looking for value for money, and it's clearly crucial that affordability is not a barrier to universal communications service access. With our distinguished line-up of speakers today and tomorrow, this conference seeks to lead the affordability debate by exploring affordability issues for all Australians. This becomes increasingly critical as we move towards a future where broadband connectivity is essential for full participation in the digital society, and where mobile services are replacing fixed lines for more and more consumers.

Before I finish, I want to thank our loyal sponsors - Telstra, Google, amaysim, Optus, NBN, Conexu Foundation, Vodafone, the National Relay Service, the ACMA, Maddocks Lawyers, Ericsson, and Infoxchange. Without our wonderful sponsors, this conference would not be happening here today. I'm sure you'll enjoy the lively discussions we'll all have over the next few days. I'd like to now introduce Uncle Chicka Madden, cultural representative for the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, who will welcome us to country. Please welcome Uncle Chicka to the podium. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

Uncle Chicka Madden: Thank you. My name is Charles Madden, but known around the inner city as Chicka. That's a nickname that I got many, many years ago going to Redfern Public School, which is now NCIE - the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence. I'm from Gadigal land. Aboriginal land. That's the land we're on at the moment. Folks, for many, many years, I've been involved with different Aboriginal organisations in and around the city. I've been a director with the Aboriginal Medical Service at Redfern for over 40 years.

Also, a director with the Redfern Aboriginal Housing Company, Aboriginal Hostels Australia, and the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council. ..where I am still a very active member. Folks, I'm from Gadigal land. Aboriginal land. I'd like to take this opportunity this morning to extend a warm and sincere welcome to any of my Aboriginal brothers and sisters, non-Aboriginal brothers and sisters. Do we have any brothers and sisters here from Torres Strait and far across the seas? Welcome. Welcome to Gadigal land. The Gadigal clan is one of 29 that makes up the Eora nation. The Eora nation is bordered by three distinctive landmarks - we have the Hawkesbury River to the north, Nepean to the west, and the Georges River to the south. Those three rivers form the boundaries of the Eora nation. Folks, if you've travelled across this great city of ours today - the state or this great country - welcome. Welcome to Gadigal land. Enjoy your stay. Have a safe and trouble-free trip home. Once again, welcome, welcome, welcome... Thank you. Enjoy the morning.

(APPLAUSE)

Welcome, everyone, to the 2015 ACCAN national conference. Thank you to Teresa Corbin, Johanna Plante, and the staff and board of ACCAN...

Teresa Corbin: OK, I'd like to introduce you to a video...

Malcolm Turnbull: Welcome, everyone, to the 2015 ACCAN national conference. Thank you to Teresa Corbin, Johanna Plante, and the staff and the board of ACCAN for the opportunity to speak to you today. I'm very sorry I can't be there in person for what looks like to be a very interesting discussion on the issue of affordability of telecommunications.

Now, it is very important for us to consider affordability questions right across the board with telecoms. One of the statistics that I know is very significant in ACCAN's thinking, and certainly very significant in mine, is that the bottom 20% measured by income of households are around 10 times less likely to have access to the internet than the top 20% of incomes. So the biggest barrier to internet access, as I've always said, is not technology - it is affordability. It's income. Or lack of income. So, making sure that broadband is affordable and Telecoms generally is affordable is absolutely critical.

You know that that is a very important part of our agenda with the NBN. Our goal with the NBN, as you know, is to have it completed as quickly and as cost-effectively as possible. Now, again, you've all heard me before on this - it was a truly crazy idea to have a project of this kind undertaken by a government start-up. Good idea for everyone to have very fast broadband - that's a great idea, and

very important national objective - but the way our predecessors went about it, it was calculated to lead to the type of problems that we have had. Having said that, I believe the NBN Co is now on track - it's got vastly improved management team, and it is meeting its targets. It is, nonetheless, a project that is much more expensive and involving much more cost to government than would have been the case had the government gone about it in a conventional way, which of course was to let private-sector telcos get on with the job and provide subsidies to ensure that people in remote areas and regional areas got a service.

Now, our approach to NBN is to get the job done quickly, as quickly as possible, and in the with the most cost-effective technologies. So we're not limiting ourselves to one-access technology. As you know, there's fibre to the node which is starting to be deployed in September at a commercial scale. We have fibre to the premises, obviously. We'll be integrating the hybrid-fibre coax networks, and its more regional areas and remote areas we have fixed wireless, which is powering ahead, and the satellite will be launched in October. So we will have the whole country covered. If we had continued with Labor's approach - again, it's a question of affordability - it would cost another \$20 billion to \$30 billion. Take another 6-8 years... Those people who are impatiently waiting for broadband now would have to wait a whole lot longer. And of course it would inevitably cost more.

So affordability is right at the foundation of our approach to NBN. Now, in terms of generally, the importance of the digital economy to the nation and to government - it's increasingly obvious that even the term "digital economy" is a bit redundant, because the economy is digital. You cannot engage effectively in the economy anymore unless you are using digital platforms.

So, digital literacy, digital accessibility, is critical. We are determined to make sure that all major government transactions with citizens are able to be conducted on digital platforms - with the same ease that you have with your bank or online commerce site. Hence the digital transformation office has been undertaken, headed by Paul Shetler, and that is a very important priority. We are very focused on the issues that you're discussing, and I really look forward to hearing the results of your deliberations. Believe me - nothing is more important to me than ensuring that all Australians have access to first-class telecommunications. And when I say "access", I don't just mean that the technology is there - but they can afford it. We can't have Australian telecommunications, you know, being open to all just like the doors of the Ritz Hotel. Affordability is absolutely critical, and that underpins our approach to the industry and, in particular, to the NBN. So, good luck with your conference. I'm sorry I can't be there. But I look forward to hearing all about it.

Teresa Corbin: It's a bit strange, because it does feel like we should clap it, even though it's only virtual, his presence.

(APPLAUSE)

But, you know, we do have a representative from the minister's office here today. So for people that would like to give some feedback to the minister's office, there will be opportunities for you. Now it's with great pleasure that I want to introduce Claire Milne, who's travelled all the way from the UK to join us today. Thanks to the internet, Claire has been corresponding with some of us Down Under and collaborating on research long-distance for many years. But this week, it's a real delight to meet her in person. Claire's got extensive research background in communications affordability. So she was the very first person I thought of when we thought of this conference, and we wanted to come up with some ideas for a keynote. So I was so excited when she accepted our invitation, and I've had the pleasure of spending a couple of days, or at least a day on Sunday, and then half of yesterday, with her. I'm very pleased that she will now spend some time sharing some of her wisdom with you all. Welcome, Claire.