

**Internet
Australia**



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Internet Australia says nbn should have primary USO broadband data responsibility

Internet Australia, the NFP peak body representing Internet users, believes that nbn should take primary responsibility for ensuring effective delivery of broadband data services under proposed changes to the Universal Service Obligation.

Appearing today at public hearings being held in Sydney by the Productivity Commission, Mr Patton argued that there needed to be a single entity charged with ensuring that an expanded USO was properly implemented.

"Subject to further consideration, we believe that nbn should have a basic and overriding responsibility to ensure everyone has broadband access, and this applies to the provision of access under the USO", Mr Patton said. "That was the basic premise when the organisation was created. While nbn is a wholesale-only provider it was always envisaged that it would provide the mechanism for ensuring everyone who needs it has broadband access".

IA pointed out that unlike the existing telco-focussed USO where there are only handful of providers the RSP market is so large that any USO broadband data model is bound to be very complicated.

While IA is yet to determine a position on exactly how it should be structured, Mr Patton told the hearings "I believe somebody has to take ultimate responsibility for making sure that an expanded USP works. In the telco case it is Telstra. In the broadband case in my view it should be nbn".

IA joined with other organisations at the hearings who maintain that the USO should be funded by government not via a levy of service providers.

"We only have a universal POTS (plain old telephone service) because it was funded and built by the government", Mr Patton commented.

IA told the Commission it sees three groups and individuals needing support under any USO. These are those who are financially constrained, people in remote areas and people with disabilities. IA maintains that for many of those requiring assistance under the USO access to the Internet is often more important than access to a standard telephone.

"There are new applications coming on to the market that make using a broadband service more helpful, especially for people with disabilities".

IA is monitoring the public hearings and will consider the formal submissions made to the

Productivity Commission prior to providing further public comment on the most effective structure for an expanded USO.

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About Internet Australia

Internet Australia is the not-for-profit peak organisation representing everyone who uses the Internet. Our mission – “Helping Shape Our Internet Future” – is to promote Internet developments for the benefit of the whole community, including business, educational, government and private Internet users. We are a broad member-based organisation not an industry lobby group. Our directors and members hold significant roles in Internet-related organisations and enable us to provide high level policy and technical information to Internet user groups, governments and regulatory authorities. Through our participation as the Australian chapter of the global Internet Society we contribute to the development of international Internet regulations and policies.