

# **CommsDay Wholesale Congress**

## **Anna Perrin keynote**

**Wednesday 16 October 2024**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Thank you and as always a huge thank you to Grahame, Veronica and the CommsDay team.

It's always fun to come to this event, to catch up on industry news and to catch up with each other.

And what an achievement that this is CommsDay's 30-year anniversary.

I moved to Australia in 2004, so I'm only a 20-year reader – but I can say that nearly every day, even sometimes when I've been on holiday, I've relied on CommsDay to bring me the daily industry news each morning.

And as we all know, there's nothing easy about what we do as an industry, which is why I think most of us love telecoms so much. Our challenges seem to get bigger and bigger each year, and I would argue, so too does the importance of our sector, which is why having a publication like CommsDay is so critical.

So much of what we do is relied upon every day by millions of Australians.

So much of what we do depends on our ability to respond to a fast-changing market.

And as a result, so much of what we do is built around collaboration and partnership.

For those of you that know me, you'd know I am passionate about partnerships. None of us, no matter the size or sophistication of our organisations, can be successful on our own.

And partnership is one of those buzz words that can be loosely thrown around and become glib. But I'm talking about real partnerships, with true two-way understanding of each other's challenges and opportunities, which take effort to put in place and maintain.

Collaboration matters to me, and it matters to NBN. So, this is where I wanted to focus my remarks today.

### **[Acknowledgement of Country]**

The ultimate collaborators are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the Traditional Owners of these lands.

And I want to acknowledge and celebrate those Traditional Owners including the Traditional Owners of the land we are on today, the

Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, and pay my respects to their elders, past and present.

Creating the longest continuous culture in the world is not possible unless you can work together to ask profound questions about the world about you...

It's not possible without innovating and inventing in ways that transcend generations and that adapt to an environment that can be extraordinarily harsh, and is, at all times, unpredictable and constantly changing.

That, to me, is the ultimate act of collaboration, and I think we all have much to learn from Australia's first peoples.

### **[Scene set – a world changing fast]**

So while collaboration, partnering and co-design is where I am going to focus, let me first zoom out to touch on the context we are operating in.

I'd argue, this is an incredibly exciting time for our industry.

We are no longer heading into a digital revolution, we are in it, living it, as the hyper-connected world that we have enabled, takes shape and continues to accelerate around us.

This is a world where already almost every aspect of our economy and way of life depends on our networks – our banking transactions; our

shopping; our health, transport, energy, water systems; how we entertain and educate ourselves; how we connect with our friends and families, and how and where we work.

This is a world where Australians are consuming more data on more devices to do more things than ever before.

A world where customers are impatient and expect instant, uninterrupted, reliable, secure and high-quality telecommunication services – from high def and ultra-high-def video streaming and video conferencing, low-latency gaming and cloud computing.

And most of this data is carried on the nbn network - currently, we carry nearly 83% of Australia's broadband internet traffic.

What is interesting is that rate at which demand has grown.

We've seen average household data grow tenfold in the last 10 years, mainly driven by the launch of all those popular video-on-demand services that 10 years ago we'd not even heard off.

Video now makes up 55% of NBN's total traffic.

Our latest quarterly stats from Sept, tell the same story:

- Peak downstream traffic increased almost 20% from the same period the year before to almost 30 terabits per second;

- Average monthly downstream usage per premise increased by 8.5% from the same period the year before to 497 Gigabytes;
- Average monthly premise upload increased of 17% compared to the previous year.

This demand – this extraordinary, explosive demand – is why we are racing to upgrade the network...

And why we are accelerating wholesale higher speed tiers that will make Australia 'future-ready' for the myriad applications coming over the horizon in the form of AI, AR, VR and much more.

Ten years ago, the average Australian household consumed around 40 Gigabytes per month – today many people would use that much data in a single day!

In fact, many of Australia's kids will burn through more than that in less than an hour while downloading a Fortnite update!

And while we might not all be gamers, or have gamers in the household, more and more of us are beginning to see the benefits of higher speeds.

Whether that's enjoying minimal buffering when we're streaming 4k or whether that's when we're downloading a movie onto an iPad before heading off on a Great Aussie Road Trip.

And just as we've seen TV go from black and white, to colour, to HD, to UHD to Video-on-Demand, this video evolution will continue.

We're already beginning to see studios start to think about immersive 360 video production and distribution. Today we have AR/VR goggles are a bit clunky, but that will change.

I was telling my boys recently that the next Top Gun movie might be totally different, instead of watching it on a screen, imagine sitting in the cockpit with Tom Cruise.

Or imagine being sat in a booth in a roadside American dinner one day, minding your business when all of a sudden, some guy jumps on the table next to you and shouts, "Everybody be cool this is a robbery!"

As an aside my boys asked how we will eat popcorn if we are in a cockpit of a plane, and I told them this is a problem for another day!

But what I have told them is education is changing, imagine being shown around The Louvre by Da Vinci himself or participating in rich, inclusive educational opportunities or medical consults that are built in the virtual world.

Looking forward there is no version of the future that does not rely on connectivity to increase the productivity, inclusiveness and resilience of our economy...

...no version of the future where connectivity does not underpin the competitiveness of our industries and their ability to innovate....

...no version of the future where connectivity doesn't enable better outcomes for Australians in areas like health, education and digital inclusion.

To meet these future scenarios, Australia needs first-class networks, and that is what is driving us to make fibre and HFC internet accessible to more than 10 million Australian homes and businesses by the end of next year.

But we don't do this alone, which is why we have also worked harder to be more constructive and transparent with industry.

I hope you are getting the idea that this is important to me personally.

And I know, nbn hasn't always been viewed as being a partner with industry. I've sat in meetings where the tension has been very real, and this tension can hinder progress, and so we have had to change.

### **[Collaborating to create a brilliant, connected future]**

We have been reworking the way we interface with our Retail partners, and I now have dedicated teams working into each RSP.

My team and I are turning up to discuss the challenging issues face to face and we are trying to listen a lot more, to find a way through.

And with a variety of views, it doesn't mean we will always agree, but we are committed to making sure we better understand each other's point of view, business challenge and preferred approach so we can move forward with more clarity.

And as with all relationships, stepping into conflict and having the discussion, however challenging, more often than not, ends with a far better understanding, which ultimately leads to better outcomes.

And I hope many of you that were involved would agree with me that a recent process around supercharging nbn's network speeds really leant into this principle and way of working. Having been involved in a lot of these conversations, I felt it was a breakthrough in the way we engage.

### **[Speed Leadership – world class collaboration]**

And for those of you that weren't involved let me take a few moments to recap.

Last month, and after six months of careful, candid consultation with our retail service providers, we were thrilled to announce that NBN Co would turbocharge its higher home speed tiers, introduce our first mass market



multi-gig plan and a new FTTP NTD that will transform the customer experience.<sup>1</sup>

As you can see on the screen, we will accelerate our popular 100/20 Mbps to 500/50 Mbps... 5 times faster.

And we will take 250/25 Mbps to 750/50 Mbps...a tripling and doubling of the download and upload speeds.

And finally, we will double the upload on our gig product, whilst also introducing a new 2 gig speed tier.

All of this will be available to participating internet providers from September 14, 2025.

### **[Speed Leadership - shaping a better outcome by working together]**

In previous consults, I was told by many of you that industry didn't feel that we had truly listened or responded to feedback. There was a feeling amongst our partners that we had a fixed position already in mind, that we weren't really consulting.

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<sup>1</sup> An end customer's experience, including the speeds actually achieved over the nbn® network, depends on some factors outside NBN Co's control (like equipment quality, software, and how a retail service provider designs its network) and the NBN Co technology used for the connection.

So in this consultation on the new speed tiers, I wanted to share how we approached this, how we responded and more importantly how close, candid, open consultation delivered a better outcome in the process.

And I want to highlight six key areas which I believe demonstrate this.

Firstly, launch timing.

There were, not surprisingly, a wide range of views on when we should go live with the proposal but we thought the sweet spot was September next year.

This is a massive piece of work and that gives everyone a 12-month runway to prepare.

Secondly, consumer education.

Everybody recognised how critical this was and NBN will take a leadership role in driving customer awareness and education around why speed matters and what customers can do to make sure they can make the most of it.

Again, this recognises that this is a huge piece of work and we'll work closely with industry, co-designing the best approach.

Thirdly, assurance.

The key piece here – and again something developed in response to ideas raised during the consultation process - is that we'll introduce a new speed test capability on the new FTTP NTDs.

RSPs wanted transparency on the speeds being delivered over fibre, so that in turn they can give customers confidence that they are getting what they pay for.

The speed test capability will be available at selected POIs from launch, with the intention to reach all POIs in the following six to 12 months.

The obvious question that we've had from some RSPs though is: what about all the millions of legacy NTDs out there?

Will speed test be able to be run on those older NTDs?

The answer to this is not yet... but it is something we are looking very closely at – testing is underway; we're encouraged by what we're seeing; and we will come back to our partners once we have more to share.

Fourth, business tiers. Here we're introducing an additional price reduction on 250/100Mbps on FTTP and introducing 250/100Mbps on HFC to ensure value relativity across the full NBN product portfolio.

Fifth, financial support for RSPs.

This is about providing targeted RSP funding support of up to \$300,000 per RSP Group to offset a proportion of the expected RSP costs associated with implementing the new FTTP NTDs and new 2 Gigabit speeds.

And finally, we also heard and acted on your feedback on Network-to-Network cost concerns, reducing both the upfront and ongoing NNI costs and making it more affordable for our partners to expand capacity where they need to in order support speed increases.

**[Speed Leadership - thank you for being part of it]**

Speaking on behalf of my colleagues at NBN, I would again like to express how very grateful we were for the time, the energy and the candor the industry dedicated to this process.

And it was clear from the outset that engagement from our partners was energetic, at times fiery, but it was always respectful and driven by a fundamental desire to act in the best interests of Australian consumers and businesses.

I know that the way we worked together will result in better products, services and outcomes for customers as a result.

And when we launch these on September 14 next year, we will offer significant benefits to the many millions of Australians we serve.

In my view, it will be a one of those significant moments that is not just another day in the office, on Sept 14<sup>th</sup> 2025, we will have significantly uplifted the digital capability of Australia.

Definitely one for a future edition of Grahame's 10-years ago today column!

### **[Looking forward]**

But this is only part of the job ahead for NBN.

We have been listening and really focusing on initiatives like reducing the complexity of our IT systems to simplify interfaces for retailers, as well as streamlining processes and systems; adding automated business processes and reducing average handling times.

We also need to be far more planned and predictable, which might not sound that exciting, but I know it's what Retailers desperately need from nbn. When we make last minute changes it creates a lot of work and makes it difficult to plan.

But we will improve here and have built a roadmap of activity that we intend to commit to – and we will publish this ahead of time – change to the plan will then be by exception.

We will also continue to digitize our data and interactions with RSPs via APIs to allow for better real time issue response.

We will work transparently with Industry on challenging topics like the Service Standards nbn should be measured by.

This is already an area of focus and will continue to be.

So much so that today I'm incredibly proud to say that we've just delivered our best Assurance performance for some years.

In August this year we saw:

- Our lowest Incoming Service Incident volumes since January, 2018.
- Our lowest Incoming Incidents per 100 Active Premises Service Assurance since January 2018.
- Our lowest In-flight Service Incident volumes since January 2019.
- And our lowest Fixed Line Mean Time To Resolve results since March 2020.

What makes the figures even more impressive is that nbn's network in January 2018 held 3.5 million active premises, compared to 8.6 million in August 2024.

At the end of FY24 service faults raised to NBN were down 27% - and we will keep focused here.

Put all of these things together and I hope you will see how committed my team and I to being a great partner, not just a better one.

You have our phone numbers; you have our email addresses; our door is always open and we are fully committed to working with you to ensure that the NBN network continues to play a key role in unlocking new social and economic benefits for households, businesses, communities and individual across Australia.

**[Conclusion – call to action – committed to collaboration]**

Let me finish by saying that a few years ago we may have not fully engaged in this sort of conversation.

The shift in our thinking has come from an understanding that being better, isn't enough, we needed to step change and opportunities can be created and shared if we work more collaboratively.

A telco industry fit-for-purpose in the future will need to be brilliant at connectivity but also brilliant at collaborating, partnering and co-designing to create more value, and better outcomes for our customers.

And as I mentioned earlier, this is something I think we can learn from Australia's First Nations people.

Because Australians are clear about the benefits they want from their providers:

Connectivity that inspires productivity, inclusiveness and resilience in our economy.

Connectivity that helps create competitive, innovative industries that we need to ensure we prosper in the future.

Connectivity that helps realise better outcomes for Australians in areas like health, education and inclusion.

And connectivity that enables new skills and new ways of working, learning and living.

NBN has the people, the capabilities and the intention to help deliver some of these impacts for the nation.

But to deliver them all, we cannot do this alone; we, you, all of us also need to be a generous partner, and we at nbn are committed to being just that.



Thanks again to CommsDay for the privilege of being able to speak here today, for bringing us all together, to continue our collaboration, and for CommsDay's ongoing interest and engagement in our sector.

And thank you to all of you, our industry partners.

I look forward to continuing to work with you all and continuing to build a connected Australia, where no one is held back, no one is left behind and every Australian can make the most of a brilliant, connected future.

Thank you.

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