**M-Enabling Australasia 2013 Conference**

**Day 1 – The view from Canberra: 9:20 – 9:35am**

JOHANNA PLANTE: Thank you. It's now time to start today's more formal presentations and I'm delighted to introduce and welcome the Minister and assisting the Minister Broadband and the Digital Economy, Senator the Honourable Kate Lundy. Minister.

KATE LUNDY: Thank you to Johanna Plante, chair of ACCAN, Teresa Corbin CEO. Axel Leblois and Karen Peltz Strauss. And to Jill Riseley from Telstra but also can I acknowledge other sponsors supporting this fantastic inaugural M‑Enabling Conference. I'd also like to welcome other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. And to pay my respects to elder Uncle Chicka of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. And past elders and thank him for his wonderful warm Welcome to Country this morning.

There's no doubt that mobile technology is spreading throughout the Australian community and we are a country, traditionally, of early adopters. In June of 2012, 8.67 million Australians aged 18 and over had a smartphone. A percentage change of 104% since 2011. And many of those people don't just use one device. 3.6 million of them use two – a smartphone and a tablet to access the Internet. Mobile broadband traffic is expected to grow strongly between 2011 and 2016. We're expecting a 14‑fold increase. Mobile technology is increasing capital productivity with estimated economic productivity benefits of over $11.8 billion over the next decade.

Ladies and gentlemen, the widespread adoption of mobile technology is creating opportunities for everybody, everywhere. These opportunities are driven by consumers increasingly using online services which, in turn, has resulted in higher data usage and community awareness, resulting in demand for yet greater capacity including the 4 G network upgrades. We know that there are 17.4 million subscribers with access to connections via a mobile hand set within Australia. An increase of 7% in just the last six months. This mobile technology can also assist people with disabilities or communication impairments who can take advantage of smartphone features to assist with communications. Either by using the built‑in features like SMS, voice recognition or translation services. For example, an app such as Georgie on Android allowed blind people to see day‑to‑day tasks like catching a bus, knowing their whereabouts and reading printed texts. Other apps like walkie-talkie use Google navigation to provide step‑by‑step directions while reading allowed business addresses and landmarks. A similar app speaks the names of a user's surroundings. Our CSIRO is trialling an app to allow the elderly to live at home for longer by collecting data on the movements around their house. This smarter Safer Home Project is currently being trialled in NSW. While data is collected by motion sensors, the data is reported to a design so the elderly person can have control over what data is provided. Vision Australia has orientated via pod cast and smartphone and tablets for people with impaired vision. A number of Queensland special schools are using tablets as learning tools for their student. Darling Point Special School uses iPads in English, maths and science classes and it's found it helped children communicate a lot better. Also in Queensland, and I would like to use Josyln Bartlett as an example is finding that it is assisting in her rehabilitation as well as helping her stay in touch with friends. While these opportunities are great with people, living with a disability or communications impairment, we also need to bear in mind the digital divide that presently exists in Australia. While smartphone usage for those aged 13‑34 was 74%, the figure is only 15% for people aged 65 and over. And smartphone users are more likely to be higher income earners and live in Metropolitan areas. So our capacity to have mobile access to data services is limited. For some people, and guided in some respects by where they live. In relation to fixed online services, service access, the Government's objective with the National Broadband Network is to make high band width services available to every Australian. With the Government's National Broadband Network, there is no charge to have the businesses or homes physically connected to the net w, to the fibre. And the guaranteed upload speeds give them the ability to have fully interactive services as high resolutions.

The Government's NBN treats regional Australians as equals with a universal price guarantee built in. This means that people pay the same wholesale price for the same broadband service whether they live in Dubbo or the middle of Sydney. We are investing $30.4 billion on a net w that will be able to deliver 1,000 megabits per second with an upload speed of 400 megabits per second, a net w that can be easily upgraded, sorry, with an upload speed of 400 megabits per second and this can be easily upgraded in the future. Of course, fixed and mobile connectivity are not alternatives. They are complementary. The high bandwidth National Broadband Network will make it easier for businesses and communities to develop WiFi hot spots and take the hot spot load over broadband networks so they are available for the broadband services they are designed for. The National Broadband Network will accelerate the rapidly growing use of hot spots for those without access to mobile broad brand. In the June 2012 quarter, over two million Australians used a WiFi hot spot – up 32% on the previous year. The infrastructure is one thing, but bridging the digital divide also means helping people understand what they can do with the Internet and how to use the necessary tools. Beyond consumption of online services, the aim must be to help people with communication challenges to participate fully in digitally enabled democracy. This means having the skills and the tools necessary to be able to develop their own online spaces and influence the direction of affairs as much as anybody else. The Rudd Labor Government's updated National Digital Economy Strategy aims to build Australian capacity to make the most offered by the infrastructure. Under this initiative, the Australian Government is providing $13.6 million in grant funding to establish a digital hubs program designed to help communities gain the skills needed to maximise the benefits offered by high band width networks. The digital hubs program is currently available in 40 communities. A key target group is seniors with limited experience with ICTs. Another angle of attack against the emergency divide is the Government's Digital First Initiative. This policy commits Australian Government agencies to using digital tannoys as the primary or preferred form of delivery. This puts major services online increasing accessibility and reducing the costs. The policy is part of a broader Government goal to have 80% of Australians choose to interact with the Government online by the year 2020. Agencies must design digital services in accordance with three core principles. Agencies will design online services for the end user so that they are convenient, secure and, of course, accessible. Agencies will use the move to digital first to redesign their digital process, reviewing the relevant policies and processes as well as legislation, where necessary.

Agencies will design their services for integration with agencies collaborating on common standards, portals and credentials to give users easy and consistent navigation. All priority Government services will be part of Digital First including services that relate to welfare, child support, health and aged‑care services. And they'll be working to make these services available online as soon as possible. Including... planning all services in accordance with Digital First from January 2014. So this conference could not have come at a better time. This will mean agencies will be planning their services to be end‑to‑end digital from initial enrolment to identity verification, to subsequent translations. And making these services available on a range of devices, computers, tablets, mobile phones, where appropriate. And where face‑to‑face services are still required, as, of course, they still will be. Agencies will also make video available as an alternative wherever cost is effective and consistent with Government policy and accessibility principles. A great example of mobile Government service delivery is the Express Plus Suite of Apps produced by the Department of Human Services. They allow people to access a variety of services via the mobile phone or tablet. With DHS claiming to be Australia's largest civilian Government agency, according to them, their mobile apps are 69% more effective at helping people find the services they need compared to the alternative online interface. DHS estimate the apps have saved 200,000 hours of network processing time since the launch back in 2012. Something close to and the figure that I have here is 975,000 apps have been downloaded. 15 million transactions processed and 100,000 customers report every fortnight using Express Plus. DHS, which is the Department of Human Services, their apps also allow people to use their smartphone camera to scan information about their claims rather than having to mail proof. Daily uploads of document photos from the apps reportedly exceed 1,300 in June of this year. In addition, the Express Plus Lite app from DHS is currently available in Vietnamese, Chinese and Arabic allowing job seekers who speak these languages to record and report their earnings using their smartphone.

Internet and mobile technologies are also having an impact on the National Relay Service. Telephone access service available to all Australians and I'm sure you're very familiar with. It assists people with a hearing or speech impairment or are deaf, to contact anyone in the wider telephone net w. Anyone in the community can use it to communicate with those who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment. And the NRS has taken advantage of new technology to assist people to access new technologies. As from July 1 this year, the new NRS services available include a video relay service that now enables deaf Australians to communicate using Auslan. An SMS relay service that enables deaf, hearing and speech impaired Australians to send an SMS from a standard mobile telephone through the NRS to another party. And further service improvements are to be progressively delivered in the second‑half of 2013, and these include – improvements to Internet to allow NRS users to receive as well as make phone calls on Internet‑enabled devices. A web‑based captioned telephony service that will allow Australians are hearing impairments to read other person's responses in phone conversations in close to real time. Access to a range of existing and future NRS service options through a mobile app.

I believe the convergence of the NRS and mobile technologies provides a new platform of inclusiveness for those with speech or hearing impairments.

Ladies and gentlemen, we're clearly facing a number of challenges with those with the communication challenges to participate fully as citizens in a digital world. In particular, some of the people who potentially benefit most from mobile technologies are the ones who currently use it least, confronted with perhaps barriers or socio economic reasons for not doing so. It's the promise of democratisation of data, be it from the digitisation of Australia's cultural assets through to you managing your personally controlled E‑health record. It's a rare fact that here in Australia, it is the universality of the National Broadband Network that will make the potential of the democratisation of this a reality. The opportunities are enormous and are still unfolding and this conference could not have come at a better time to help guide Government policy, to provide us with the practical and pragmatic advice that ACCAN has a strong history of doing. As we proceed down the pathway to becoming the most connected nation on earth and closing our digital divide through active, through our active commitment to the National Broadband Network, I'm a very proud member of the Rudd Labor Government which is promoting these policies. I know this conference will make a very positive contribution to the conversation we have before us, and I would like to wish each and every one of you all the best over the next couple of days. I would like to congratulate the organisers once again. We can only achieve what we aspire to achieve as a Government – a fair society full of opportunity – if we get quality advice from organisations and conferences such as this on what the path looks like to get there.

I would like to finish by just letting you know that all of the links to the initiatives that are described in my speech will be available on my website and I'll be making a particular effort to ensure that it is as accessible as I can possibly make it.

Thank you so much for listening this morning. Have a great couple days.

JOHANNA PLANTE: Can I ask you to stay at the lectern for two minutes?

KATE LUNDY: Certainly.

JOHANNA PLANTE: You have a very small opportunity to ask the Minister a few questions. Please remember to wait for the microphone before you do. Is there anyone that would like to ask a question?

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Thank you for your speech. Just a question – a technical one, in a sense. We're used to having unicasting, the main form of broadband for mobile devices. But in rural Australia, where we're still on satellite, we actually need multicasting. We need all our providers to develop – to implement – multicasting. Because even if we take on board all the things we've spoken about here today, if we're using satellite in rural areas, it's about making sure that people with disabilities in rural areas can still access all those services. And we need multicasting on the satellite. So if we can take that on board, that would be marvellous.

KATE LUNDY: OK. Look, I certainly will. As many you will know, part of the National Broadband Network plan is that there will be a percentage of Australians serviced via satellite to make sure we get that universal coverage. So I will certainly follow that up and make sure that we can get an answer for you.

JOHANNA PLANTE: Thank you, Minister. We have a question just in front of the gentleman that asked the last question.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Thank you. It's Susan Thompson, advocacy advisor at Vision Australia. I'm interested to just throw an idea out there – it's one that – I understand, under Government processes, that there are licences, for example, for companies to be able to retail in Australia, and perhaps I thought that licensing system should have built into it a requirement that, if they have a retail licence to retail in Australia, there is some accessibility mandates, such that things like mobile phones, auxiliary equipment that might be used with the broadband network and a whole host of other things can be guaranteed to be accessible when they're brought into the country?

KATE LUNDY: Look, a great point. I'm not familiar with the licensing requirements and how they relate to accessibility, but as part of our commitment to making all services accessible, we would need to be opening up a dialogue, I would expect, with the Retailers Association, and indeed other private‑sector service providers on the accessibility question. Thank you for raising that.

JOHANNA PLANTE: Thank you, Minister. And one more question – this is the last. Ah, but who was first? I don't know. Can anyone here help me as to who was first?

KATE LUNDY: Can I invite, people, perhaps – because I will be – we provide another channel, if you have additional questions for me to forward them to me. Perhaps, Teresa, you can assist me with that, and we'll be very happy to follow up.

JOHANNA PLANTE: That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: That solves the problem of having two.

JOHANNA PLANTE: We'll have one question. That'll be it.

UNKNOWN SPEAKER: Senator, can I ask if you support Teresa Corbin's call for a new communications act?

KATE LUNDY: Specifically, I mentioned in my speech – at I'm sure you heard – if we require legislation to give effect to the accessibility principles under digital first, then yes, we would do it. It would be my pleasure to work with ACCAN to look at that legislation, presuming and hoping that we're in a position to do so as a Government.

JOHANNA PLANTE: That's wonderful.

(APPLAUSE)

JOHANNA PLANTE: Thank you so much for your presentation. Thank you.

KATE LUNDY: Thanks very much, Johanna.

Thanks, everybody. Have great conference.

(APPLAUSE)