

to take control of the Perth-based Quickflix. However, shareholders voted in favour of Langsford's team.

Geoff Long

Tucker renews call for national FTTH

Professor Rod Tucker, one of several experts who recommended an FTTP NBN to the federal government in 2009, remains a strong supporter of pervasive FTTH – and has urged engineers to wade into policy debate to “counteract technical confusion and misinformation.”

Tucker addressed the 2014 Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers international comms conference in Sydney yesterday, speaking to hundreds of international expert researchers and engineers. He noted that the Australian NBN debate had become a hot topic both politically and in the media over the last few years but said much of the arguments had lacked a technical basis.

“One of the things that really irritated me... was really ill-informed opinions in the press [and the] dearth of informed technical debate,” he said.

“I tried to encourage quite a few of my engineering colleagues from around Australia to get involved in this technical debate and really get the message across; what one has to do is really boil down detailed technical arguments into something that a layperson can understand. Because even the reporters in the press, the technology reporters, are laypeople.”

“But I found it was very difficult to get my engineering colleagues involved in this debate; quite a few of them said to me ‘no, no, it’s too political.’”

Moving to the current state of the NBN, while he credited the Coalition with recognising that broadband was an essential infrastructure meriting government involvement, Tucker challenged its decision to run a cost-benefit analysis on the NBN. “My personal belief is that it’s hard to do a cost-benefit analysis of broadband; it involves predicting the future. And predicting the future in... the impact of technology on society, it’s very hard to predict. And it’s hard to come up with a hard number about what the costs and benefits are going to be for society.”

Tucker also expressed some reservations with the multi-technology mix that the current government has chosen for the NBN, citing as one issue that “different technologies have different symmetries; one of the difficulties with HFC is asymmetry and the difficulty of upload speeds.” Tucker also voiced serious doubts about the idea of ‘fibre on demand’ under the current NBN program, arguing that it “takes away from the very original core objective of equality of access to broadband.”

Internationally, argued Tucker, FTTP was on the rise. “There are FTTP premises rollouts in more than 100 countries around the world at the moment, and in most of Scandinavia and the Netherlands, and some of the Arab oil states, there’s penetration of more than 50%. So FTTP is happening,” he said, also citing examples such as Google Fibre and AT&T’s tentative plans to compete, and noting that “by 2014, China aims to have about 100 million households connected to fibre.”

“Engineers need to become more involved in the political debate,” said Tucker. “It is important to counteract technical confusion and misinformation. I think FTTP will eventually come to Australia, as it will most other places, but unfortunately we’re coming in Australia via a circuitous route!”

Petroc Wilton



NTT Com to extend subsea cable to Cambodia

NTT Communications is reportedly teaming up with Cambodian ISP Chuan Wei to build Cambodia’s first subsea cable connection.

According to a report in Nikkei, NTT Com and Chuan Wei has reached an agreement to extend a branching unit on the Asia Submarine cable Express cable system into Cambodia. The ASE is a NTT Com-led consortium cable connecting Japan, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore and Malaysia. Other consortium members include Telekom Malaysia, PLDT, and StarHub.