PLANNING CHANGES TO SUPPORT NBN ROLLOUT

The NSW Government has amended a State environmental planning policy to make it easier to rollout fibre optic cabling including for the National Broadband Network (NBN).

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said he had approved amendments to the Infrastructure State environmental planning policy.

“This amendment will have an immediate impact in the first two release areas in NSW - Armidale and Minnamurra/Kiama Downs,” the Minister said.

“The change removes the need for NBN Co and any other fibre optic cabling provider to comply with the out-of-date Australian Communications Industry Forum’s Cable Network Code.

“However, these providers will still need to comply with the access standards established by the relevant power utilities.

“The NBN Co claims no longer having to comply with two different codes will greatly assist its rollout.”

In addition, the amendment facilitates the construction of other fibre optic cable facilities such as fibre access nodes and improves visual impacts.

Mr Kelly said it will allow the fibre optic cabling to sit 30 centimetres closer to electricity cables and therefore even higher on power poles – taking the cabling further away from public view and reducing clutter.

“The amendment has the support of the relevant power utilities such as Country Energy, Integral Energy, and Energy Australia,” the Minister said.

“The NSW Government has acted swiftly to amend its policy following the request by the NBN Co to allow NSW communities to benefit from fibre optic cabling.

“It underlines NSW’s acknowledged position as a national leader in providing streamlined planning systems to support telecommunications infrastructure.”

The first release areas, in New England and the Illawarra, will enable the NBN Co to test the impact on the rollout on different terrain, housing type and density, demographics, climate, existing infrastructure and other local factors.

The sites will also enable the company to trial the technology and how it will interact with retail service providers.

The Department of Planning published a Telecommunications Guideline in July this year to provide streamlined planning processes for the NBN rollout and other telecommunications facilities.