



**THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF
QUESTnet**

**PROGRESS REPORT PRESENTED TO
QUESTnet MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

TOOWOOMBA

5 JULY 1994

Life Questnet

TERMS OF REFERENCE

DBIRD project Q130/9:

- Examine the current and potential role of QUESTnet in providing services for Queensland universities, State Government and instrumentalities, local government, Technical and Further Education, research organisations, K to 12 education, continuing professional education, industry and the wider community.
- Recommend types of services, access and infrastructure for the development of QUESTnet.
- Recommend appropriate actions that could be taken by the Queensland Government, the members of QUESTnet and other organisations to promote the rapid development of QUESTnet.

Particular questions to be answered include:

- What are the current and potential applications and services to be provided by QUESTnet?
- What effect might deregulation in 1997 have on QUESTnet?
- Who are the current and potential users?
- What will be the level of future demand for these services?
- How should these services be priced and/or funded?
- What kinds of technological capacity will be needed to ensure the adequacy of provision of service over QUESTnet?
- How should equitable access be provided to QUESTnet?

Study to be undertaken within six weeks from 2 June 1994.

Task (1)

Evaluate the current role of QUESTnet.

Task (2)

Evaluate the future potential of QUESTnet:

- focus group discussions in Brisbane and Townsville (Reark Research/Tactix);
- quantitative study of industry (Reark Research);
- meeting with QUESTnet Management Committee.

Task (3)

Assessment of the communications environment (InterTech Management; and STM Consulting).

Task (4)

Development of action plan.

Task (1)

QUESTnet members to provide list of affiliates.

Task (2)

Paul Boland, Senior Consultant, Reark Research Pty Ltd, will present an overview of the qualitative and quantitative market research, and will report on preliminary results.

Task (3)

Deregulation of communications environment over next three years likely to see increasing competition in supply of telecomms services (both by Telecom and Optus, and by private/VPN suppliers such as BT and PacStar), with the following effects:

- reductions in prices for QUESTnet links, and greater choice of commercial options;
- increasing availability of bandwidth for those links, and greater choice of technical options;
- reductions in prices for services by which users may access QUESTnet;
- opportunities to develop strategic alliances with vendors;
- opportunities to become value-added vendor/reseller.

Few current constraints on opportunities for providers of value-added services, for example, growth of CompuServe in Australia. The main factors affecting these services are related more to market appeal (services offered, ease of use, customer access, pricing, marketing) than the telecommunications environment.

The key to development of these services is building up a customer base by offering them the services they need, either directly or by access to other service providers. Advantages for users are a single point of access, billing, and a consistent user interface.

Potential broadband delivery technologies:

- bandwidth versus cost (and whether high bandwidth is distributive, with low bandwidth back-channel, or fully interactive, with high bandwidth in both directions);
- range of delivery technologies, particularly in the non-household sectors (entertainment services will be the basis of home use of a broadband capable network);
- broadband digital wireless may provide export opportunities;
- AARNet initiatives including EBN (ATM-based fibre experimental network);
- Telecom's proposed RACnet.

Queensland initiatives by ^{A.} (IPB) (policy, machinery-of-government), Q-TEL, IIB, Office of Rural Communities. *CITEL?*

Federal initiatives: Businesslink/DIST First-stop shop; DEET global classroom.

Task (4)

Will QUESTnet be a passive network, providing transport services, or, in addition to this role, offer added-value services in its own right?

QUESTnet	
Strengths	Weaknesses
Infrastructure Expertise and track-record Partnership with DBIRD	Resources; sources of funds Lack of commercial expertise Lack of wider collaboration with Queensland Government
Opportunities	Threats
Deregulation Broadband/new technologies Demand from potential users	AARNet uncertainties; State Government policies Sources of funds Commercial providers

"QUESTnet Plus" developed progressively over two years:

- directory of users;
- directory of services available on QUESTnet (and AARNet?);
- information searching and retrieval services based on this directory;
- information/database access services;
- enhanced electronic mail services;
- consistent customer interface, graphically-based;
- consistent command set with command translation to provide ease of use for selected services from attached organisations;
- billing services for QUESTnet and for attached service providers;
- customer support and training.