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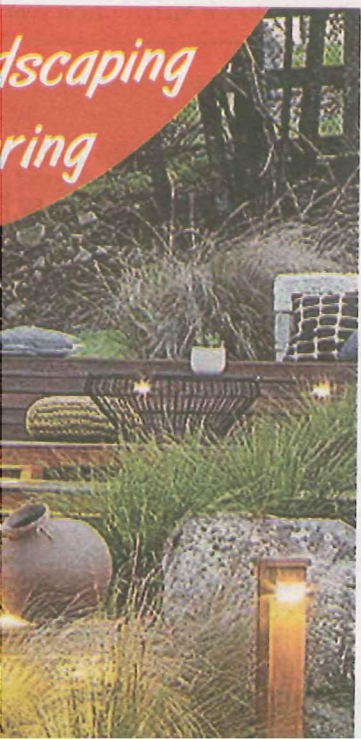
Mr Mead said the National Broadband Network would keep businesses competitive.

"For our business and the other businesses in Acacia Park its crucial to be competitive. It's ludicrous that most of Armidale is connected when an area producing 12 per cent of the city's income isn't," he said.

Armidale resident and NBN user Dave Rubie says the NBN has been great for his business since his job requires a lot of data transfer.

Mr Heberly said the Coalition's plan is not about creating a good service. "Fibre to the node is an economic decision not about the best product, but about squeezing the last juice out of a copper network. Maybe if they had started a fibre to the node network in 2003 it would have worked but it's too late," he said.

The University of New England's David Lamb said farmers shouldn't be any better or worse off either way since both policies provide comparable broadband speeds. "As far as farmers are concerned there is very little difference," Professor Lamb said. "When it comes down to technology the concern has been that the satellite product give them what they need."



Landscaping
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BLIND AMBITION: Visually impaired cyclist Andrew Devenish-Meares prepares for his big ride with Dave Rubie.

Andrew uses his pedal power to help others

By GRANT ROBERTSON

ANDREW Devenish-Meares is a keen cyclist.

The only obstacle for the 37-year-old Armidale man is he's legally blind.

But that's no obstacle at all when you have a tandem bike and a mate who likes to ride as well.

Andrew is preparing to ride in the Bupa Around the Bay in Melbourne, which is a fundraiser for The Smith Family, and hopes Armidale people will get behind his efforts.

The IT systems analyst at the University of New England has been riding for six years and will tackle the 210km charity event with "captain" and riding mate Tim Manton, who is from Wollongong where Andrew used to live.

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"We rode with a group on tandems with other blind people and people with other disabilities and captains who rode with us," Andrew said.

"Tim had done the

ride before and asked me if I wanted to do it next year."

That year was 2010.

Andrew is back for another go this year and has found a local training partner in Dave Rubie.

Andrew and Dave ride together regularly and competed in the Coffs Coast Challenge last month.

Dave has been a member of the Armidale Cycle Club for a while and when Andrew called up looking for someone to ride the tandem bike with him Dave decided to give it a go.

Andrew will ride for the BHP Billiton team in Melbourne and Armidale people can sponsor him and the team.

He is a big supporter of The Smith Family's efforts to help underprivileged children with their education.

"I set a goal of \$516, which is the cost of one child's education for a year," Andrew said.

"I thought that was a good target."

To donate to Andrew or his team go to www.aroundthebayfundraising.com.au and type in his name or BHP Billiton.

The ride is on October 20.



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