



Better communications

Providing access to reliable mobile phone and internet coverage, no matter where Australians live

Australian farmers need access to reliable, affordable mobile phone and internet to run their businesses. Regional communities need to be connected.

Eliminating mobile black spots

Mobile phone services in regional and rural Australia are sometimes not available or are unreliable or expensive. Expanding mobile coverage to areas where it is currently inadequate or non-existent has clear economic, social and safety benefits.

The Government has already established the **\$100 million Mobile Black Spot Programme** to extend mobile coverage throughout regional Australia.

Round one of the programme is delivering almost 500 new or upgraded base stations across the country, which will bring coverage to all or part of some 6,000 locations reported as mobile blackspots. In regional Australia we will deliver new and upgraded handheld coverage to over 68,000 square kilometres and new external antenna coverage to over 150,000 square kilometres.

The Government recently announced an **additional \$60 million** investment to extend the Programme for a second round, commencing in 2016–17.

Delivering regional satellites

Satellite is one of the most economic ways of delivering high speed broadband in areas where fixed wireless and fixed line services can be prohibitively expensive to deliver.

The Government spent more than **\$34 million to improve the Interim Satellite Service** after the initial program delivered speeds little better than dial-up in busy hours.

In 2015-16 we will **launch the National Broadband Network's (NBN) next-generation KA-band satellites to improve speed and data allowances**. This will revolutionise connectivity for homes and businesses in rural and remote areas of Australia, offering speeds and data allowances vastly in excess of previously available satellite broadband services.

Rolling out the NBN

Today's farmers need access to mobile phone coverage and broadband internet to run their businesses efficiently. Farmers that have access to these services can adapt technologies that enable them to run their businesses from the stockyard, from their

tractor or while they are harvesting.

The use of information technology has evolved from basic GPS to precision farming. The next frontier is 'big data' — or analysing and using information from many sources (such as precipitation or soil composition monitoring from built-in farm machinery sensors). Farmers can make their fields and paddocks more profitable with decision making based on real time delivery of relevant and specific information.

Communications technology will keep our farmers in the game. That's why the Government is **investing \$29.5 billion of equity towards constructing the NBN.**

The coming year will see major improvements in NBN coverage across the country. As of April 2015, almost 30 per cent of premises passed by the NBN's fixed line network were in regional areas. An additional 308,200 premises in service and under construction in the fixed line footprint were in regional areas. In the National Rollout Plan, covering the period to September 2016, 52 per cent of premises where the NBN will be available or under construction are in regional areas.

Connecting farmers for high quality production

Farmers with improved connectivity can adopt new technology such as:

- remote monitoring of soil moisture levels and environmental conditions;
- low cost wireless tracking to understand livestock activity;
- video monitoring of key equipment;
- high-quality communication with experts around the world; and
- direct product marketing and access to real-time pricing.

Further Information

- agwhitepaper.agriculture.gov.au