

# CONNECTING COUNTRY COMMUNITIES

## Fact sheet

### OVERVIEW

The Connecting Country Communities Fund was established to invest in communications infrastructure, and deliver improved regional voice and data connectivity. The fund will build and upgrade mobile base stations and invest in the telecommunications infrastructure needed to deliver faster and more reliable digital connectivity for communities and businesses in regional NSW.

Valued at \$50 million, the Connecting Country Communities Fund currently delivers two key programs:

1. the Mobile Black Spot Program
2. the Regional Digital Connectivity Program.

### MOBILE BLACK SPOT PROGRAM

The NSW Government has allocated \$39 million for the NSW component of the Mobile Black Spot Program, which is a national program jointly funded by Commonwealth and state governments as well as mobile network providers.

The Mobile Black Spot Program will deliver up to 183 new or upgraded mobile base stations in NSW, of which over 100 have already been activated with remaining sites to be delivered in 2018-19.

The 183 locations were chosen following a public call for submissions nominating mobile black spots, combined with a competitive selection process. Mobile network operators were asked to nominate sites where they would build new or upgrade base stations to address the black spots nominated by the public.

For more information on black spot site selection, see the fact sheet at [communications.gov.au/mobile\\_coverage](https://communications.gov.au/mobile_coverage)

This major infrastructure investment will help regional residents and businesses stay connected. In particular, the rollout will improve mobile coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and across locations prone to natural disasters. It will make regional NSW an even better place to live and do business.

The NSW Government is committed to improving and extending coverage of high-quality voice and broadband services in rural and regional areas.

The program aims to:

- identify key non-coverage or mobile black spot sites across NSW
- establish end-to-end solutions for site builds that provide coverage for mobile black spot sites
- deliver maximum value for money
- leverage the successful supplier's network infrastructure to reduce duplication of site builds identified under the NSW Government's **Critical Communications Enhancement Program**
- effectively eliminate mobile black spots and extend mobile phone coverage within identified areas.

## BENEFITS FOR REGIONAL NSW

The Mobile Black Spot Program will:

- extend the coverage of high-quality voice and mobile broadband services in regional and rural areas of NSW
- provide mobile coverage to residents and people travelling on major transport routes within NSW, including immediate access to the services provided by public safety agencies
- focus on locations with unique coverage problems in small communities or areas prone to natural disasters
- boost competition in mobile communications, leading to the availability of cheaper and higher quality services
- provide access to new technologies via improved mobile coverage for key business sectors in regional NSW
- deliver new and high-quality mobile voice and data coverage to approximately 18,800 premises within regional and rural areas, on completion of the program.

The NSW Telco Authority is also working with industry to identify further opportunities to increase mobile coverage in regional parts of the state through the Mobile Black Spot Program. More information is provided in the Mobile Black Spot Program fact sheet.

## REGIONAL DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

The NSW Government has established the Regional Digital Connectivity (RDC) Program to identify opportunities to enable access to fast and reliable broadband internet services in regional NSW. This will support further regional growth and meet future connectivity demand.

The RDC Program aims to enable digital connectivity in the regions that is comparable to the quality of services available in metropolitan areas of the state.

The NSW State Infrastructure Strategy 2018-2038 set a goal of having high-speed internet available across regional NSW by 2020.

## BENEFITS FOR REGIONAL NSW

The RDC Program aims to:

- identify key digital connectivity issues and sites in regional and rural parts of NSW
- leverage existing assets including towers, land, fibre and backhaul to broaden access to high-speed internet in regional areas
- deliver value for money and increase competition
- improve digital connectivity within identified areas.

The NSW Telco Authority is working with internet providers to identify opportunities to provide wholesale broadband services in regional areas.

Proposals will be submitted to the NSW Telco Authority, through an Expression of Interest (EOI) process to collect information about options for:

- providing open-access, wholesale broadband service, with a guaranteed minimum 25Mbps download and 5Mbps upload, in regional areas
- alternative and innovative internet delivery models for regional NSW
- delivering value for money and maximising opportunities for a more competitive wholesale internet market.

Proposals submitted through the EOI process will be considered in terms of:

- how a 25/5 wholesale broadband service would be delivered across regional NSW over a two-year program
- how value for money would be achieved
- the service delivery models, alternative commercial frameworks and innovative solutions that could be offered by industry
- options for leveraging existing NSW Government assets including mobile towers, land, fibre and backhaul.

More information is provided in the Regional Digital Connectivity fact sheet.

## WORKING WITH REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

If you live or work in regional NSW and are experiencing regular problems with mobile phone coverage and/or internet connectivity (i.e. slow or unreliable service) you can let us know about it through the Connecting Country Communities Fund **web page** or by phoning **1300 679 673** before 15 August 2018.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the Connecting Country Communities Fund, the Mobile Black Spot Program and the Regional Digital Connectivity Program, go to **[nsw.gov.au/connectingcountrycommunities](http://nsw.gov.au/connectingcountrycommunities)**.

**Email: [regionalnsw.business@dpc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:regionalnsw.business@dpc.nsw.gov.au)**

**Phone: 1300 679 673**