



Media Release

Monday 2 July 2018

Regional nbn™ network rollout on the home stretch

Australia projected to reach the top 10 OECD countries for internet equality by 2021*

The rollout of the nbn™ broadband access network in regional Australia is on the home stretch with nearly all¹ homes and businesses outside of major urban areas now in design or construction stages, or able to order an nbn™ service from a phone or internet provider.

Thanks to the early prioritisation of the rollout in regional areas, the digital divide between the city and the bush is shrinking, with new research revealing Australia now ranks 17th among OECD countries (up from 29th in 2012) in terms of equality of internet speed and proportion of people without internet access.

The data comes from the *Connecting Australia* report: the nation's first social and economic study into the impact of the nbn™ access network, which was conducted by data analytics and economics firm AlphaBeta (and commissioned by NBN Co).

It projects that, by 2021, Australia is estimated to move from being in the bottom 10 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in equality of internet access and speed to the top 10².

Today's announcement coincides with another significant milestone for NBN Co. More than four million Australian homes and businesses (one in three) are now connected to services over the nbn™ access network, with the majority (58 per cent) in non-metro areas.

NBN Co's CEO Bill Morrow said:

"With our aim to help bridge the digital divide and see that Australians, regardless of location, have access to fast broadband, we are proud today to announce that the rollout of the nbn™ access network to regional Australia is on the home stretch.

"We have seen a massive improvement in regional internet access, with our wholesale broadband services offering more competition, faster speeds and even giving some Australians internet access for the first time.

"Our research shows that this connectivity revolution is spurring rapid growth in the digital economy and regional businesses, which may lead to further migration away from cities to regional hotspots. For example, we have seen Newcastle diversify itself from a focus on steel to tech start-ups and similar pivots in mining towns like Ballarat.



“There is still work to be done alongside industry in order to continually improve the customer experience of people who connect to the **nbn™** access network, however, we take heart that these findings show the positive impact that access to fast broadband is already providing to the nation.

“We are now halfway through our target of connecting eight million homes and businesses by 2020, and we will be working hard to finalise the build and connect the rest across the next few years.”

Mark Harvey-Sutton, Policy Director, National Farmers’ Federation and Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition said:

“This is very welcome news for Australia’s farmers. It has been a long time coming and we have been waiting for the digital divide to close. There is huge potential for the agriculture sector coming from increased connectivity as well as improved lifestyle benefits like running a business and keeping your kids at home so they can do their education in a more efficient manner.”

Georgie Somerset, Deputy Chair and SE Regional Director, AgForce Qld Farmers said:

“I think it is exciting we are at the stage where nearly everyone can access high-speed broadband and that we are seeing the evidence that it is a critical productivity increase. I think in many ways, it is almost more critical for rural and regional people to have access as they are more geographically isolated and have a range of issues that they are overcoming every day to run their businesses and live their lives.”

Key findings from the *Connecting Australia* report:

- **Economic:** The **nbn™** access network is estimated to have helped drive \$450 million in additional gross domestic product in regional Australia in the 2017 financial year and is forecast to drive an additional \$5.3 billion in additional gross domestic product in regional areas in FY21.
- **Employment:** The **nbn™** access network is estimated to have helped create an additional 1,750 jobs in regional Australia by the 2017 financial year and this employment impact is forecast to reach up to 20,000 jobs by FY21.
- **Flexible work:** Annual growth in people working from home in regional areas with access to the **nbn™** access network is significant, at 2.2 per cent per year from 2011–2016 versus a decline in the annual growth rate of 1.1 per cent in regional Australia without access to the **nbn™** access network.
- **Business growth:** The growth of new businesses in regions connected to the **nbn™** access network accelerated at twice the pace of the national average with up to 5,400 additional new businesses created in 2017.

For more information about the report, visit the [Connecting Australia website](#).

¹ The total number as of 27th June 2018 is 99.92% in design, construction or complete with the exception of some premises such as remote off shore islands, complex rural sites, and some government premises.

^{*2} Australia is projected to reach the top 10 OECD countries for internet equality by 2021 (assuming all other OECD countries hold constant at their 2016 figures).

ENDS

Media enquiries

Craig Jost

Email: craigjost@nbnco.com.au

Mobile: 0429 787 818

nbn™ Media Hotline

Email: media@nbnco.com.au

Phone: 02 9927 4200



Resources

Click [here](#) for images

Click [here](#) for audio

Click [here](#) for video



Note to editors

- The *Connecting Australia* report was commissioned by NBN Co through independent research agency AlphaBeta in 2017. It combines national census data with an Ipsos survey of 3,500 individuals across 1,700 postcodes in metropolitan, regional and remote areas, including those connected to the **nbn**[™] access network and those not connected
- Methodology on internet speed and access data for Australia and other OECD countries can be viewed [here](#)