

House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Infrastructure and Communications

Inquiry into the role and potential of the National Broadband Network

Submission by



Australian Government

**Department of Regional Australia,
Regional Development and
Local Government**

February 2011

Introduction

This submission is made by the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications - Inquiry into the Role and Potential of the National Broadband Network.

The submission describes the Department's responsibilities for regional Australia and regional development and how these are relevant to the potential National Broadband Network (NBN).

The submission is made noting the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, with particular focus on the capacity of the NBN to contribute to:

- the delivery of government services and programs;
- impacting regional economic growth and employment opportunities;
- impacting business efficiencies and revenues, particularly for small and medium business, and Australia's export market; and
- facilitating community and social benefits.

Responsibilities of the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government was established on 14 September 2010 as part of the Prime Minister's portfolio.

The Department works across the Government and in partnership with states, territories, regional groups, Regional Development Australia committees and local government to improve the social, economic and environmental outcomes for Australia's regions through:

- engagement and empowerment of local communities;
- development and coordination of regional policy and programs; and
- provision of financial assistance.

The Government has put in place new arrangements to empower local communities, increase investment and improve the coordination of policy and program delivery across government. This approach aims to:

- increase productivity, economic development and diversification in regional Australia;
- support leadership and representation in local communities;
- improve service delivery in regional Australia;
- improve outcomes from the Commonwealth's investment in regional Australia; and
- improve the coordination of functions across government and different tiers of government.

In 2010-11 the department will focus on the following priority areas:

- strengthen and support the Regional Development Australia network to develop plans for their regions and advise government and agencies across the Australian Public Service on regional needs and priorities;

- progress the establishment of a new 'myregion' website, which will provide easy access to information on Commonwealth programs;
- progress the work for a referendum to recognise local government in the constitution;
- provide advice on the impact of policies and programs;
- provide Financial Assistance Grants to councils and shires to assist them to deliver their services, maintain local roads and upgrade local community facilities;
- support the priorities of the Regional Australia and Regional Development Committee of Cabinet;
- oversight progress in implementing the Government's Commitment to Regional Australia;
- deliver a range of regional programs to meet national and regional priorities
- develop key national indicators for regional Australia that can be benchmarked over the coming three years;
- develop arrangements to enable the establishment of a Regional Development Policy Centre early in the 2011-12 financial year;
- upgrade infrastructure to support the Immigration Detention Centre on Christmas Island;
- define and agree the Commonwealth interests in the national capital; and
- implement the Territories Law Reform Act 2010 to facilitate participation by the Norfolk Island community in the rights and obligations of the broader Australian community (while recognising local empowerment and regional diversity) and promote the island's economic development.

In addition to establishing the Department, the Government has put in place new governance arrangements to ensure regional issues are considered across Government, which include:

- a dedicated Cabinet-level Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government;
- a Regional Australia and Regional Development sub-committee of Cabinet;
- the Regional Development Australia network, including seven supporting Parliamentary Secretaries and Ministers, one for each State and Territory, who seek to represent regional Australia to the Government; and
- a House of Representatives Committee on Regional Australia.

Overview of Regional Australia

Regional Australia is a vital part of Australia's economy, providing around 60% of Australia's export earnings. It is also home to communities that are an integral part of Australia's culture, society and history. Around one third of Australians live in Regional Australia.

The characteristics of communities across Australia are very diverse, with different:

- economic opportunities and challenges;
- population demographics and trends ;
- skills and capacities in the community; and
- natural resource and environmental assets.

Australian communities face many challenges and opportunities, including ongoing economic change, the ageing of our population, climate change and water supply, shifting trade markets, increasing competition for labour and skills and access to facilities and services, such as health and education.

The Australian Government is committed to improving the social, economic and environmental outcomes for Australia's regions. The NBN has the potential to support and address many of the challenges and opportunities facing regional communities in Australia.

Regional Policy context

Commitment to Regional Australia

The 7 September 2010 Agreement between the Government and Independent Members of Parliament, Mr Tony Windsor MP and Mr Rob Oakeshott MP, outlines a range of measures to increase the representation of regional Australia at the national level, including strengthening governance and accountability arrangements and committing to regional investments in telecommunications, health, education and infrastructure. As part of the *Commitment to Regional Australia* annex to the Agreement, the Government committed to a number of measures relating to the NBN, including a uniform national wholesale price, priority rollout for regional communities and NBN Co bringing forward the introduction of wireless and satellite services.

Regional Development Australia

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is a partnership between the Australian, State and Territory and local governments to support the growth and development of Australia's regions.

RDA is delivered through a national network of 55 committees that:

- support regional planning;
- consult and engage with the community on economic, social and environmental issues, solutions and priorities;
- liaise with governments and local communities about government programs, services, grants and initiatives for regional development; and
- contribute to business growth plans and investment strategies, environmental solutions and social inclusion strategies in their region.

RDA committees build partnerships between governments, regional development organisations, local businesses, community groups and key regional stakeholders to provide strategic and targeted responses to economic, environmental and social issues affecting the regions of Australia. The RDA Charter is provided at [Attachment A](#).

A majority of RDA committees identified access to improved information technology and the provision of infrastructure to support access to technology as a key issue for their region as part of their Regional Plans, which have been prepared by each committee to define regional priorities.

Administration of the External Australian Territories

The Department has responsibility for administering the Commonwealth's interests in the Australian Territories, including delivering State-type essential services and infrastructure in the Indian Ocean and Jervis Bay Territories, including education, health, television and communications infrastructure.

Consistent with this commitment, access to high speed broadband is required by the community of the Territories to:

- ensure effective service delivery including health, education and border controls;
- support economic and social well being;
- provide economic development opportunities; and
- ensure connectivity with communities and services in mainland Australia and globally.

The strategic value of the Territories supports retention of a resident population. The Australian Government is committed to providing services which support the economic and social sustainability of the Territories and ensuring services are comparable with those provided to similar communities on mainland Australia.

Current Internet access and use in regional Australia

In recent years, the prominence of the Internet as a vehicle for accessing information, communicating and undertaking commerce has continued to increase.¹ Between 1998 to 2008-09, household access to the Internet at home more than quadrupled from 16% to 72%, while access to computers increased from 44% to 78%.² At the end of June 2010, there were 9.6 million active internet subscribers in Australia.³

Generally speaking, households outside of metropolitan Australia are less likely to be connected to a computer, the Internet and/or broadband.⁴ Despite this, there is still evidence that current Internet and broadband technology is being applied in a variety of ways to improve outcomes in regional areas. For example, in 2007-08, 66% of farms were using the Internet for business operations and 48% of farms used a broadband connection.⁵

The rapid take-up of technology presents opportunities for regional communities, but also requires an increase in digital literacy to encourage take-up in order to minimise the risk of perpetuating the 'digital divide' between regional and metropolitan areas. Internet access is important to people living in remote areas as it provides increased access to services, resources and information that are physically located far from home.⁶

An illustration of some of the opportunities and challenges of internet use in remote areas, through a case study of the Indian Ocean Territories is presented in Box 1.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 2008

² Australian Bureau of Statistics 4100.0.55.001 - Multipurpose Household Survey, 2008-09

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics 8153.0 - Internet Activity, Australia, Jun 2010

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics 8146.0 - Household Use of Information Technology, Australia, 2008-09

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics 8150.0 - Use of the Internet on Farms, Australia, 2007-08

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics 4102.0 - Australian Social Trends, 2008

Box 1:

Case Study – Internet Access and Use in the Indian Ocean Territories

The Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) comprises the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island.

The internet in the IOT is primarily accessed via Satellite through a local internet service provider (ISP). The remote location, the topography, dispersed populations and small subscriber base provide a range of technical, logistical and commercial challenges which increase costs of service delivery in the IOT compared to a similar service on mainland Australia. This includes the cost of accessing satellites which are understood to be considerably higher than equivalent services on mainland Australia. Satellite connections experience signal delays in transmission, or latency, which impact on the response time for internet and hence limits functionality. Increasing speed of wireless links or increasing bandwidth will not decrease latency.

Distribution of internet on Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands is generally through wireless system. Dial-up services are available using the Telstra telephone network.

Residents and visitors to the Territories use the internet to do many of the functions that on the mainland might be done via mail or face-to-face. Given delays in mail delivery and the remoteness of location, the Internet is used for banking, applications, shopping (including food), social media and business. Latency and limited bandwidth pose problems for these activities at certain times of the day and it is not unknown for banking transactions to 'time-out'. Commercial businesses use the internet to maintain a web-presence but due to the limitations do not have a significant presence through social media such as Twitter and Facebook. There are a significant number of internet-delivered educational services, that the schools in the IOT are unable to access, due to the limitations of internet services. There is no 3G access on either island.

Some of the Government agencies and larger organisations use other ISPs via satellite as the capacity offered by the current ISP is not sufficient to meet their needs or they have other contractual obligations. This has resulted in a fragmented service delivery model where economies of scale cannot be leveraged to meet the needs of the broader community.

The Attorney-General's Department is managing a project to connect all Commonwealth Departments on the island by fibre optic cable (which already exists in some areas of the island). This project is essentially a Territories owned project and once the three year funding is complete, the project will be handed over to the Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government.

Regional Rollout of the National Broadband Network

The NBN will ensure that every community in regional Australia gets fair and equal access to affordable high-speed broadband. Wholesale broadband prices will be the same regardless of location and irrespective of the technology platform used to deliver the services.

The Government's objective for NBN Co is to connect 93 per cent of Australian homes, schools and businesses with fibre-to-the-premises technology providing broadband speeds of up to 100 megabits per second, with all remaining premises to be served by a combination of next-generation fixed wireless and satellite technologies providing peak speeds of at least 12 megabits per second.⁷

The Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government is taking an active role in ensuring consideration of regional priorities is taken into account in the NBN rollout. The Department is also working with RDA committees to explore the opportunities the NBN may bring to regional areas.

The Government has also encouraged NBN Co, through its *Statement of Expectations*, to explore mechanisms by which community inputs and advice on regional priorities—to overcome the digital divide and improve efficiency of the rollout—can be considered by NBN Co, including through existing structures like the Regional Development Australia committees.⁸

NBN coverage in the External Australian Territories

The Department has been advised that the Indian Ocean Territories and Norfolk Island will be covered under the NBN satellite solution, that is, part of the 7% of Australian households that will receive peak speeds of at least 12 megabits per second. It is understood that the NBN will be available to the Territories in 2015 through satellite technology.

Most Commonwealth telecommunications legislation does not extend to the external Territories. For example, Norfolk Island is unable to access benefits available to other regional and remote areas within Australia, such as the universal service obligation. Access to modern technology, including the NBN, and exposure to mainland conditions is essential to ensuring equity in service provision for Norfolk Island residents. Such an environment will also support the strengthening of ties between the territories and the mainland which is paramount to implementing recent economic and other future reforms.

More broadly, the NBN provides the opportunity to bring all the inhabited external territories under a common telecommunications regime.

Regional Broadband Coordinators

The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy has engaged Regional Broadband Coordinators to work with regional, rural and remote communities in priority backbone blackspot locations to take full advantage of the opportunities of broadband.

⁷ Statement of Expectations – letter from Ministers Wong and Conroy to Mr Harrison Young, Chairman, NBN Co, 17 December 2010

⁸ Statement of Expectations – letter from Ministers Wong and Conroy to Mr Harrison Young, Chairman, NBN Co, 17 December 2010

The Regional Broadband Coordinators will provide a key liaison, consultation and feedback point on broadband in regional, rural and remote communities located along and near the new infrastructure being deployed under the Regional Backbone Blackspots Program. This infrastructure is the first building block of the National Broadband Network on the mainland.

Coordinators will perform a variety of roles, including raising awareness of broadband, promoting broadband take-up and providing information on key government initiatives. Eight Coordinators have been engaged covering all backbone routes. Coordinators will work closely with key community, business and government organisations, including RDA. The majority of the Coordinators are co-located in RDA offices. A list of Regional Broadband Coordinators, their coverage area and host organisation is at [Attachment B](#).

The potential of the NBN to improve regional outcomes

The National Broadband Network is central to the Government's whole-of-government approach to regional development. It has the potential to transform the way people in regional, rural and remote areas connect within and beyond their communities.

Some broad examples of how the NBN could be leveraged to improve outcomes for regional Australia include:

- Economic development and diversification
 - Small-medium enterprises accessing new markets through the NBN
 - Allowing major businesses to locate outside Greater Capital Cities where overheads are lower.
 - Encouraging new NBN-enabled enterprises
 - Efficiency and productivity gains through electronic business practices
 - Creating virtual hubs for research and business expertise
- Skills, employment and workforce participation
 - Accessing skilled workers beyond the immediate geographic area
 - Tele-working opportunities – reducing congestion and encouraging a better work/life balance
 - Greater training and professional development opportunities in regional areas
- Health
 - Access to specialist health professionals via video link
 - Tele-health initiatives such as remote patient diagnosis and monitoring
 - Integrated information and data such as electronic medical records
 - Online health support services and education on public health initiatives
- Education
 - Interactive learning opportunities
 - Online tutoring, mentoring and educational support
 - Teaching opportunities via video link
 - Remote education and training opportunities
- Community support and social inclusion
 - Connecting communities through online forums, access to local information and opportunities for community participation from home

- Improving social outcomes through engagement with social media
- Government service delivery
 - Online delivery of Government services
 - One-stop-shops for accessing services
 - Integrated service delivery and online opportunities to work across levels of government

Improving regional outcomes through the RDA network

RDA Regional Plans

Each RDA committee is required to develop a Regional Plan, which describes the region, its strengths and weaknesses, and a long-term vision for development. Regional Plans are informed by an understanding of government policies and initiatives, and the ways in which communities can engage with them. They are a contributor to the identification of regional goals and initiatives.

To date, 54 Regional Plans have been completed⁹.

Regional plans and broadband

A survey of the Regional Plans identified that 30 of the 54 RDA committees have identified access to information technology and the provision of infrastructure to support access to information technology as a key issue for their region. Plans have cited access to broadband as a key requirement of their communities, arguing that it builds connectivity, supports business development and growth, and underpins access to online education and health services.

It should be noted that Regional Plans reflect the priorities which the RDA committee considers that it has the skills, capacity and/or financial resources to action. This may not be representative of the importance which local communities place on access to broadband. In some regions, issues and priorities are not included in the Regional Plan because that space is crowded with other organisations, solutions are already in train, or the RDA has little capacity to engage or influence the outcome.

Of the 30 committees listing access to information technology as a priority, 17 committees have listed actions in their Regional Plan, although most do not articulate timelines.

Examples of the type of actions undertaken by individual RDAs include:

- promoting the region as a priority for NBN rollout;
- contacting the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy to explore options for NBN rollout;
- consulting with neighbouring RDAs to identify multi-regional opportunities for NBN rollout;

⁹ RDA Adelaide is an unincorporated advisory board and is not required to submit a Regional Plan. In addition, the RDA Logan and Redlands (Qld) Regional Plan is being reviewed by an independent expert organisation in order to strengthen it.

- working with local governments to explore joint opportunities for NBN rollout;
- liaising with a range of stakeholders across the region to facilitate a 'whole-of-region' approach to NBN rollout;
- developing a business case to support NBN rollout into the region;
- meeting with NBN Co representatives or inviting them to their region; and
- undertaking NBN-readiness studies.

Specific examples include:

- RDA Central Coast partnering with RDA Hunter, Industry and Investment NSW and local councils to fund a report to assess the broadband readiness of the Central Coast and Hunter regions;
- RDA Ipswich and West Moreton being part of a consortium with other regional stakeholders to advocate the early rollout of NBN;
- RDA Moreton Bay's membership of the Smart Regions Broadband Project, which is assisting the local council to identify and deliver initiatives to enable the region to be 'broadband ready';
- RDA Mid West Gascoyne co-locating an NBN Coordinator in its office, ensuring that the two work closely on the rollout of NBN across the region;
- RDA Barossa developing a Digital Strategy for the Barossa which promotes the region as digital ready and highlights the leveraging opportunity this represents for the NBN;
- RDA Illawarra being closely involved in the development of a proposal for a Centre for Excellence in electronic and mobile (e/m) Government which will coordinate and contribute to e/m Government initiatives around research, technology and enablement through the United Nations (UN). The sub-group involved in the proposal has involved the University of Wollongong, Enterprise Connect and the regional ICT industry;
- RDA Mid North Coast participating in 'GO Broadband', a broadband project being led by Southern Cross University and Coffs Harbour Council. The Project is monitoring and assessing the rollout of the 2nd phase test site in Coffs Harbour in 2011; and
- RDA Mid North Coast leading a group of RDAs (Hunter, Central Coast and Northern Rivers) between Sydney and Brisbane which are cooperatively pursuing the concept of an Eastern Regional Digital Corridor.

Improving outcomes for the External Australian Territories

The NBN has the potential to reduce the costs of services and improve quality of life in the Territories. The NBN also has the potential to not only foster new business opportunities and sustain the local communities, but also reduce isolation and promote social inclusion through online engagement with mainland Australia.

Telecommunications

The Department is responsible for administering the Commonwealth's interest in the Australian Territories, including delivering essential services such as telecommunications.

Jervis Bay Territory (located adjacent to the Shoalhaven Region in NSW) is able to access telecommunications available in the area. Mobile phone coverage is limited within the

Territory, which in turn impacts on emergency services. It is hoped that the introduction of the NBN will help address the problem.

Similarly, in the Indian Ocean Territories, there is limited mobile access. A local digital mobile phone network is operated on the Cocos (Keeling) Islands by a not-for-profit community organisation, Christmas Island Internet Administration Ltd. Phones must be registered to access this service and may be hired locally and are assigned a local phone number. Coverage is limited.

Christmas Island mobile phone coverage is a GSM service for voice and SMS only provided by Telstra. To access the system a Telstra handset or international roaming must be used. The existing network does not allow Blackberry devices to be used to their full capacity. While the phone and SMS systems work, the other features do not. Given the high number of Government employees, this is a significant impediment to Government work. Tourism data suggests that tourists have a basic expectation of fast telecommunications; the NBN may provide an opportunity for the Australian Government to improve the telecommunication capabilities in the IOT.

The NBN will provide greater opportunity for video conferencing for Government, business and the community. For the Government, it will reduce the need for face to face meetings, making consultation processes easier, cheaper and greener.

Tourism

Tourism is identified as one of the key economic industries for a secure and sustainable IOT. Introduction of the NBN will impact on tourism in many ways: improved opportunities for tourism marketing: interactive websites; on-line booking facilities and improved standard of services available to guests.

Health and Community Services

The NBN also provides the potential to enhance education, health, and justice services in the Territories. Health Services in the IOT are currently limited and rely heavily on the provision of diagnostic and processing facilities on the mainland. For example, x-ray screening for the highly infectious disease tuberculosis involves digitising images in the Territories, sending the images to Western Australia for processing and then communicating the results back to the IOT. The NBN has the potential to reduce a process which currently takes days down to a matter of hours or minutes, saving not only time and money, but reducing the risk of further infection.

The NBN will also enable residents and visitors to take advantage of e-health initiatives. While the Territories have fully functioning hospitals, specialists are flown in from time to time from the mainland. Difficulties encountered when travelling in times of inclement weather could be overcome by the use of e-health applications to meet demand during these times.

Other functions, such as the administration of court services in the IOT require a magistrate to be flown in. The NBN could reduce what is an expensive trip that can take days to a video link, taking hours or minutes and produce significant savings.

The Department also has responsibility for emergency and disaster preparation and co-ordination of Australian Government crisis response and recovery efforts. The NBN provides opportunities for enhancing communication and co-ordination activities during times of crisis.

Education

The Territories can be considered to have some of the most remote schools in Australia. Digital education technologies have the potential to enable schools, and residents, access to vocational education, training institutions and universities which would otherwise be difficult to access. Education in the Territories is provided through WA Education, which has a number of programs designed to be delivered via the Internet. Internet access in the Territories is limited and programs are not consistently accessible to students, therefore impacting their education. High-speed internet will allow students to access similar educational tools as those in major cities. It will also provide tools such as video-conferencing as an updated form of 'School of the Air', which can reduce the social isolation of these students.

International initiatives

There are a number of international initiatives that contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the use high-speed broadband in regional, rural and remote areas. While there are differences in the topography, population density and other geographical features that may restrict comparisons between countries and international regions, there are many innovative structures and ideas and that could equally be adopted and amended for Australian conditions. Two examples of international initiatives are provided below.

United Nations Broadband Commission for Digital Development

The Broadband Commission for Digital Development was established in 2010 by the United Nations International Telecommunications Union. The Commission aims to define practical ways in which countries can expand broadband access.

The Commissioners represent governments from around the world, relevant industries, international agencies, and organisations concerned with development. The Australian Government is represented by Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy.

A recent report from the Broadband Commission highlights the critical need for accessible and affordable broadband as the basis of "opportunity for all citizens wherever they live and whatever their circumstances".¹⁰

European Commission

The European Commission is the Executive body of the European Union. Broadband was identified as a major priority under the European Commission's Rural Development Policy 2007-2013. The European Commission has recognised that good internet access can reduce

¹⁰ Broadband Commission for Digital Development, A 2010 Leadership Imperative: The Future Built on Broadband

isolation and increase the competitiveness of farms and companies in rural areas, especially small and medium enterprises, through access to international markets and more efficient ways of doing business.¹¹

Conclusion

There are many opportunities for regional Australia to leverage the rollout of the NBN to increase efficiency and productivity, improve access to goods and services, enhance social and community engagement and bridge the large physical distances that often result in poorer outcomes compared with metropolitan regions.

The Department is working closely across Government and with regional communities, including through the Regional Development Australia network and the administration of the external territories to maximise the opportunities of the NBN rollout for Australia's regions.

¹¹ European Commission - Better access for rural areas to modern ICT – 2009
ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/employment/ict/com2009_103_en.pdf



CHARTER

September 2009

Regional Development Australia is a partnership between the Australian, state, territory and local governments to develop and strengthen the regional communities of Australia. It will have a pivotal role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of Australia's regions.

Regional Development Australia will work with all sectors of the community, including women, young people, Indigenous Australians and people from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

A key focus of Regional Development Australia will be on the economic, social and environmental issues affecting communities. Regional Development Australia will be an important contributor to and driver of:

- Regional business growth plans and strategies, which will help support economic development, the creation of new jobs, skills development and business investment;
- Environmental solutions, which will support ongoing sustainability and the management of climate change (including the impact of drought, flood or bushfires); and
- Social inclusion strategies, which will bring together and support all members of the community.

Regional Development Australia, in consultation with the community, business, non profit organisations and all levels of government, will articulate local priorities, identify and align resources, engage stakeholders and promote solutions. In doing this, Regional Development Australia will support the growth and development of regional communities across the country.

Regional Development Australia will support, promote and disseminate information on government policy initiatives for the benefit of local communities. To this end, Regional Development Australia committees and Chairs will have a strong understanding of federal, state and local government policies and initiatives, and the ways in which local communities can engage with them. Regional Development Australia will take a leadership role in bringing together organisations to take advantage of government programs, policies and initiatives.

Regional Development Australia will be an effective conduit between governments and regional communities. It will enable all communities to provide input to governments about the strengths and weaknesses of regional Australia.

Regional Broadband Coordinators

Coordinator Location	Coverage Area	Host Organisation	Status
Toowoomba, QLD	Toowoomba to Arcadia	RDA Darling Downs and South West	MOU signed
Darwin, NT	Darwin – covering the route from Darwin down to the Northern Territory – Queensland border	RDA Northern Territory	MOU signed
Tanunda, SA	Gawler to Renmark	RDA Barossa	MOU signed
Mt Barker, SA	Victor Harbor	RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island	MOU signed
Wonthaggi, VIC	South West Gippsland	Bass Coast Shire Council (interim) Regional Development Victoria Gippsland in the longer term	MOU signed
Mildura, VIC	Shepparton, Mildura and Broken Hill	Mildura Development Corporation	MOU signed
Geraldton, WA	Geraldton to Perth	RDA Mid West Gascoyne	MOU signed
Emerald, QLD	Emerald, Longreach and Mt Isa	Central Highlands Development Corporation	MOU signed