

Media Release

Townsville NBN construction contract announced

14 July 2010

NBN Co Limited, the company responsible for the delivery and operation of the national broadband network, today announced Ergon Energy will construct the passive optical fibre network in Townsville.

Parts of Aitkenvale and Mundingburra in Townsville have been selected among five sites around Australia for the initial rollout of the national broadband network.

Three organisations have been awarded construction contracts for the first five release sites being Silcar Pty Ltd, Armidale NSW, Transfield Services, Minnamurra/Kiama Downs, NSW and ETSA Utilities, the South Australian power distribution network operator in Willunga.

For the fifth site, Brunswick in Victoria, NBN Co is in discussions with Telstra regarding the potential design and construction solutions that may be possible making use of the Telstra infrastructure.

NBN Co Chief Executive Officer, Mike Quigley said: "We will be offering free fibre-to-the-premises connections to home and business owners in the first release sites."

"Premises will then be NBN ready when retail service providers start to use our network to offer high-speed broadband services," he said.

The first release sites were announced in March and selected to allow NBN Co to test the rollout in areas of different terrain, housing type and density, demographics, climate, existing infrastructure and other local factors.

The selection of a mix of contractors and power utilities will further allow NBN Co to evaluate the suitability of different contractor and construction models.

The selection of the construction contractors followed the detailed design of each site – allowing NBN Co to source an aerial and an underground solution for each one.

"The sites will have a mix of underground and aerial deployment determined by a combination of factors, including the availability of existing underground ducts or overhead power poles to access premises," Mr Quigley said.

The construction of the passive optical network is the first of three phases of work outlined by NBN Co when it announced the first release sites. Construction is planned to start in the second half of the calendar year.

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The second stage will see NBN Co deploy some of the active network equipment in the Fibre Access Nodes. This is the equipment that allows NBN Co to “light up” the fibre in readiness for service delivery.

Stage three will involve work with retail service providers, giving them access to the network and, via the network, to end-users so RSPs can test their retail services.

NBN Co has already started the process of community consultation regarding its plans, with information sessions conducted in Townsville last month. Further information and opportunities for discussion will be provided prior to the commencement of construction.

Further information, including site maps, is available at www.nbnco.com.au

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