

Wednesday 1 April 2009

PR/046/09

All telecommunications upgrades welcome, say farmers

The NSW Farmers' Association has welcomed news that telecommunications services to a further 50,000 homes in regional areas will soon have access to high speed broadband.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie says that while such announcements are routine, today's announcement from Telstra does indicate a step in the right direction for telecommunication services in the bush, particularly given rural and regional telecommunications were labelled substandard by the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) six months ago.

"Consumers have the right to expect continual upgrades to networks and services, like the upgrade announced by Telstra today," Mr Laurie said.

"Regional consumers in particular have the right to expect such upgrades, as traditionally they have not been a high priority when it comes to improved services.

"In saying that, it is important to highlight when advances are made by providers in improving telecommunications for those living and working in regional areas.

"Today's announcement is of particular note as it comes less than a month after the Government chose to defer its response to the RTIRC report, leaving many questions unanswered for the rural and regional sector," Mr Laurie said.

The RTIRC report which was released in October 2008, found that telecommunication services, specifically mobile services and the availability of broadband internet access in rural and regional Australia, are still inadequate.

"The Government has chosen to delay its response to many of the recommendations outlined in this report until the outcome of the National Broadband Network (NBN) process has been finalised," Mr Laurie said.

"Such a decision means that many our Members have been left in the dark regarding services, and we remain concerned that the NBN has provided no commitment or outcomes to rural Australia to date.

"While we await the outcomes of the NBN and the Government's response, we welcome the news that telecommunications providers continue to improve services for rural residents," Mr Laurie concluded.

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