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Telecommunications: Regional and rural NSW still waiting

The NSW Farmers' Association has raised serious questions regarding the equality of telecommunications for rural and regional residents, following yesterday's National Broadband Network (NBN) announcement by the Government.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie says that further information must be provided to address the Association's concerns regarding the availability and equality of telecommunications, as well as indicating the amount of time it will take for the NBN to be developed and services improved.

"The Association supports improvements to telecommunications via the Government re-entering the telecommunications sector on a short-term basis and committing to substantially improving the telecommunications services available to all Australians," Mr Laurie said.

"Rural communities and farming businesses play a vital role in the Australian economy and modern marketing and supply chains need access to state of the art telecommunications services to remain competitive.

"The announcement must decrease the disparity that exists between telecommunications services in regional and metropolitan NSW and Australia, creating equality for all users.

"The Government has now committed to connecting fibre to homes by 2017, allowing speeds of 100 megabytes per second (Mbps) for 90 per cent of the population. The remaining 10 per cent, who will be on wireless and satellite, all need improved services," Mr Laurie said.

The Association is therefore calling for investment in regional areas as a priority, including immediate investment in wireless and satellite technology to increase available broadband speeds, and a commitment to make the Australian Broadband Guarantee available to the 10 per cent of the population not covered by the NBN.

"The Association, in conjunction with the National Farmers' Federation, has been very vocal on the issue of telecommunications for regional and rural Australia, having provided many submissions to telecommunication reviews," Mr Laurie said.

"All Australians should have access to quality, affordable and equitable telecommunications services, and we will continue to lobby for this until it occurs," Mr Laurie concluded.

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