



## Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy

**MINISTER FOR BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY**  
**DEPUTY LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE**

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### Australian Broadband Guarantee funding until 2012

The Minister for Broadband, Communications and Digital Economy, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, today announced an extension of the Australian Broadband Guarantee program to safeguard the broadband opportunities for all Australians, while the Government continues to implement its broader broadband policy agenda.

The Australian Broadband Guarantee program will receive additional funding in the 2008–09 Budget which will bring the total program funding up to \$270.7 million over four years.

“The Australian Broadband Guarantee has played an important role in ensuring high-quality, equitable broadband access for the more remote areas of Australia,” Senator Conroy said.

The extension of this program for a further four years will provide a safety net for Australians, particularly those in rural and regional Australia, who currently cannot access metro-comparable broadband services, while the Government implements longer term solutions to improve access to broadband services available for all Australians.

“The Australian Government is committed to providing Australians with access to high quality broadband services, no matter where they live or work,” Senator Conroy said.

“A key plank of the Government’s strategy is the Government’s commitment to establish a National Broadband Network (NBN) to provide high-speed broadband services to 98 per cent of premises and businesses.”

“However, it is important that all Australians have equitable access to broadband, both while the network is being rolled out, and in those most remote areas that the new network may not cover.”

“That is why, in parallel to the NBN process, the Government is separately conducting a consultation process on policy and funding initiatives to provide enhanced broadband to rural and remote areas, including those that may fall outside the new network.”

“This process will explore long term options in order to ensure that rural and remote areas have access to the best available broadband services.

“In response to industry and consumer feedback, changes will be made to the Australian Broadband Guarantee to encourage greater terrestrial broadband access and to target Australians living in remote and difficult-to-service ‘blackspot’ areas.”

“This will be a new phase for the Australian Broadband Guarantee. The Government’s changes to the Australian Broadband Guarantee and its commitment to funding for four years will encourage the broadband industry to develop more long-term and innovative internet solutions for rural and regional Australians.”

“There will be greater incentives for industry to take a whole-of-region approach to network deployment. The certainty of funding will also ensure Internet service providers are not hindered from making longer-term plans for building infrastructure.”

"Finally, it demonstrates that the Government recognises the importance of broadband to the future prosperity of Australia," Senator Conroy said.

*ends*

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Australian Broadband Guarantee funding until 2012

### **Why is this important?**

- The Australian Broadband Guarantee operates as a safety net for those in rural and remote locations that do not have access to a threshold level of broadband service (defined in terms of both price and performance).
- The Australian Broadband Guarantee will also provide access to improved broadband services to the two per cent of Australia that are unlikely to receive broadband coverage from the National Broadband Network.
- A four-year commitment to funding allows the internet industry to develop long-term solutions to providing improved broadband services to these remote parts of regional Australia.

### **Who will benefit?**

- Rural and remote Australians who are not able to access a metro-comparable broadband service.
- Australians living in metropolitan 'blackspot' areas.
- The program is eligible to consumers, small businesses (of 20 or less full-time employees) and Indigenous Community Councils.

### **What funding is the Government committing to the initiative?**

- The Government will provide \$270.7 million over four years.

### **Timeframe for delivery, i.e. when will the initiative commence and conclude?**

- The funding allocated under the 2008–09 Budget will be for Australian Broadband Guarantee to operate from 1 July 2008 until 30 June 2012.
- The Australian Broadband Guarantee is already funded to operate until 30 June 2008.