



Broadband Connect Fact Sheet

OPEL, a joint venture wholesale company between Optus and Elders, is the successful bidder for the Australian Government's \$600 million *Broadband Connect* program.

Following the selection of OPEL, the Howard Government has decided to allocate a further \$358 million to enable the OPEL network to go further, resulting in the extension of high speed broadband to 99 per cent of Australians.

Optus and Elders will match the Australian Government's funding with cash and in-kind contributions totalling at least \$917 million.

The core features of the new national OPEL network include:

- Offering very fast broadband speeds of 12Mbps by 30 June 2009 at prices that are comparable to metropolitan areas;
- The provision of 12 Mbps coverage, 20–40 times faster than most people are on today, to almost 9.5 million premises including in areas such as Birdsville and Bedourie and the elimination of almost all broadband blackspots in areas including outer metropolitan Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane;
- The rollout of 1361 new state of the art wireless broadband 'WiMAX' sites across the country;
- The venture will install a new 12 megabit per second WiMAX broadband network, and a further 312 exchanges will be enabled with very fast ADSL2+ broadband for the first time. Optus is enabling a further 114 ADSL2+ exchanges on a commercial basis. This will provide Australia with a total of 426 new ADSL2+ exchanges; and
- 15 000 kilometres of fibre optic cable open access backhaul to extend the broadband highways that link rural areas back to major cities. This will include two links across the Bass Strait to Tasmania. Existing regional backhaul charges will be reduced by at least 30 per cent.

OPEL will be a structurally separated 'wholesale only' company, selling services to the joint venture partners Optus and Elders, but also to any other service provider in the market on an open and transparent basis.

The OPEL project also includes access to Elders' extensive regional branch presence with over 400 'shop fronts' in rural and regional areas.

The first services are expected come online in September 2007 with the entire network completed by 30 June 2009.