



Australian Government

Australian Broadband Guarantee

Applications deadline update

On 11 September 2008 we advised you that the closing date for applications under the 2008–09 Australian Broadband Guarantee program (ABG) had been extended to 31 October 2008. This extension was to allow the Department to undertake a detailed assessment of whether Optus' 3G wireless broadband services meet the definition of metro-comparable services under the program, from both a technical and coverage perspective.

It is important to note that Vodafone has also recently announced new service plans on its 3G network that appear to meet the ABG metro-comparability standard. The Department's objective in undertaking an assessment of Optus' and Vodafone's commercial offerings is to determine whether they meet the ABG definition of a metro-comparable service and should therefore be recognised as commercially available Category A services on the Department's Broadband Service Locator. We note that Optus has committed to achieving coverage of 98 per cent of the population by the end of 2009 and that Vodafone has committed to achieving 95 per cent coverage, although it is yet to confirm the timeframe.

We have undertaken a detailed independent assessment of the coverage and performance of Optus' 3G wireless broadband services, including substantial field testing across a range of locations, and are continuing to work with Optus to resolve some outstanding matters. We have also commenced assessment of Vodafone's wireless broadband services following its recent announcement of revised plans.

Given the closing date for ABG applications is now approaching, we are writing to confirm that applications need to be lodged with the Department by Friday 31 October 2008. This is to enable the Department to finalise assessment of applications as soon as possible (including any applications from providers of satellite services that would not be affected by terrestrial coverage issues). However, we appreciate that uncertainty regarding potential service areas may have affected the ability of some applicants to finalise all aspects of their applications. Accordingly, we will accept applications that are incomplete to the extent that some information is contingent upon potential service areas being confirmed and will work with those applicants to resolve outstanding information requirements expeditiously.

It is important to note that applications from providers seeking registration for terrestrial service areas beyond the proposed coverage of these 3G networks will be assessed by the Department without being affected by these issues.

We appreciate your patience and understanding while issues relating to these significant commercial developments are resolved.

Simon Cobcroft

A/g Assistant Secretary

Broadband Infrastructure Branch

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy