

# NextGen's fibre optic reach grows

MEREDITH BOOTH

AUSTRALIA'S third-largest fibre optic network, NextGen, has invested more than \$4 million in South Australia since September to push its reach to Port Lincoln and Mt Gambier, managing director Phil Sykes says.

The expatriate South Australian - who stepped in as head of the Leighton Holdings subsidiary in April, 2008 - oversaw the purchase of Silk Telecoms (which took over the former ETS Telecoms) in June, 2008, to expand the company's SA presence.

Now with 700km of fibre laid in SA and 50 enterprise customers including BAE, Anglicare SA, RAA and Benson Radiology and Adelaide Brighton Cement, the company will spend a further \$4 million over three years to complete an Eyre Peninsula connection.

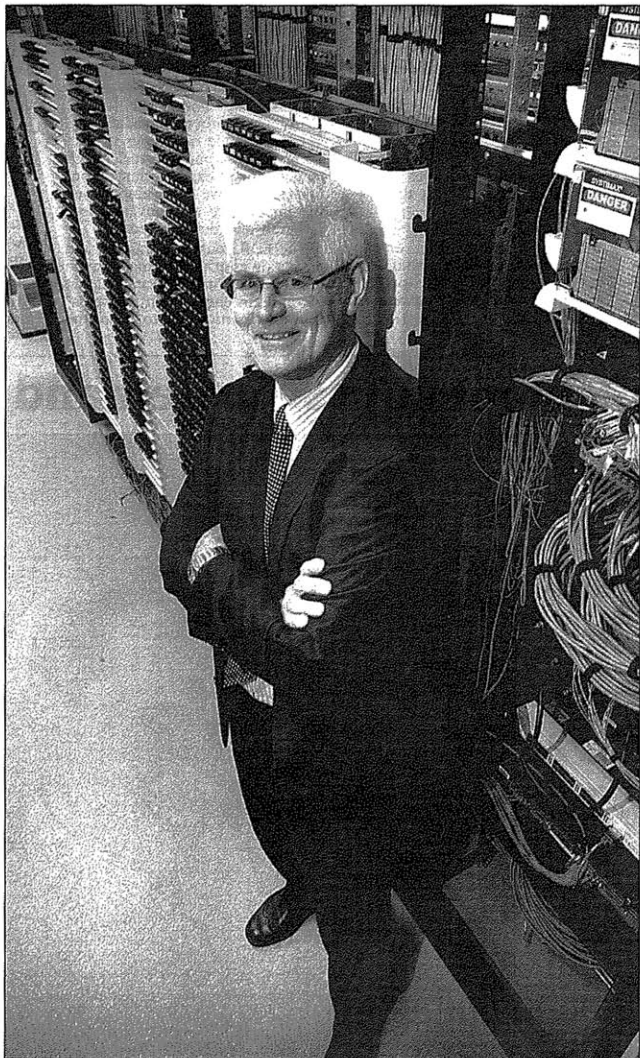
Mr Sykes said the company would install microwave connections to the two regional cities allowing fast-speed data transfer, such as medical scans, to be sent.

With half its business supplying wholesale broadband to ISPs and carriers, the company is growing its customer base of large businesses that spend on average \$100,000 a year on telecommunications and are now demanding one gigabit-per-second speeds.

"We're seeing in the corporate and government space the demand for capacity well above 100Mbps. Throughout the marketplace, they want 1Gbps and above; it's a pretty profound change," he said.

"It seems just a few years ago those same businesses were moving from expensive and slow Telstra Frame Relay connections to the then 'new' tens of megabit per second services."

The company competes with Telstra and Optus for large corporate customers but wants to differentiate itself by offering better



**COMPETITION:** Phil Sykes... "we're delivering fair value".

Picture: MARK BRAKE

service. "We're delivering fair value in the market but if people have a mission-critical application, they need good service," he said.

With a tier-one data centre in Hindley St, the company has relationships

with every ISP and carrier in Australia and says it has capacity to supply 100Gbps in the lab.

"That means our intention is to continue to grow market share in the corporate and government space."

The \$100 million-turnover company has ambitions of moving up the ranks from third to second supplier to corporate Australia for high-speed fibre and has trebled its sales force to 180 people in the past nine months to ramp up its presence.