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BARTHOLOMEUSZ

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### NEWS

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### Nextgen wins \$250 million NBN tender

QUICK SUMMARY | FULL STORY

By a staff reporter

Leighton Holdings Ltd-owned carrier Nextgen Networks has won the tender for the federal government's \$250 million Regional Backbone Blackspots Program, which will put in place key infrastructure for the National Broadband Network (NBN).

Nextgen will build fibre optic cable networks to bring competing wholesale backhaul services to some of Australia's highest-priced regional locations for broadband services.

The infrastructure is aimed at increasing consumer choice of providers for both fixed line (DSL) and mobile services.

"This priority \$250 million investment will directly benefit more than 395,000 people in 100 regional locations and create new jobs across five states and the Northern Territory," Communications Minister Stephen Conroy said in a statement.

A total of 6,000 kilometres of fibre broadband links will be built, forming the first stage of the NBN on the mainland.

Links will be built from Toowoomba to Darwin, Perth to Geraldton, Shepparton through Mildura to Adelaide, Mildura to Broken Hill, Sale to Wonthaggi and Adelaide to Victor Harbour and on to Mount Barker.

"We are in an advanced stage of project readiness having walked the routes, undertaken design work and notified our suppliers," Leighton's telecommunications division executive general manager, Peter McGrath, said.

Mr McGrath said that Nextgen was well-positioned to begin construction soon, with construction of the new backhaul links likely to be completed within 18 months.

Each link will be progressively activated as it is completed, with the first links due to be finished within 12 months.

"Nextgen welcomes this Australian Government initiative to extend competitive wholesale services to under serviced areas of Australia," he said.

Senator Conroy said that Nextgen has demonstrated the ability to deliver timely, high-quality, technological solutions.

The minister said that assistance will be provided to regional communities to take advantage of the new infrastructure through \$5 million funding for regional NBN coordinators.

"The NBN coordinators will work closely with Nextgen, local communities, governments and retail service providers to ensure that they are able to make full use of the new infrastructure," Senator Conroy said.

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