



MEDIA RELEASE

INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT WELCOMED

(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

Launceston, TAS, 19 June 2009 – Digital Tasmania has welcomed the continued investment in mobile networks in Tasmania, bringing competitive telecommunications services to outlying areas for the first time.

Optus plans on adding almost 50 new mobile sites in Tasmania, more than doubling their current number of sites in the state. Digital Tasmania estimates that up to \$24 million will be spent by Optus to extend coverage to areas such as the East and West coasts, the Tasman Peninsula, the North-East and North-West of Tasmania.

Andrew Connor, spokesperson from Digital Tasmania applauded the effort.

"We are pleased to see that despite the current economic climate, Optus have chosen to stick to their commitment to expand their coverage in the state by the end of this year."

"This new infrastructure is a huge step towards competitive telco services becoming available in rural and costal areas of Tasmania however we are concerned that a number of towers have been rejected by community opposition or against planning recommendations."

As well as expanded mobile phone coverage, residents in previously underserved areas area also stand to directly benefit from the ability to access wireless broadband products from a number of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) including Optus, Virgin Mobile Broadband, Exetel, Dodo, Adam Internet and Internode.

Mr Connor acknowledged however there was some concern over these developments in parts of the community.

"Residents should not be overly concerned about radiation from these sites. Each proposed site has had an assessment performed to predict the amount of electromagnetic energy that will be emitted. These levels are generally less than 0.01% of the continual exposure limits set by the Australian Government."

"Siting of towers is a delicate balancing act between managing technical requirements such as power, backhaul and radio signal coverage with the community concerns. In cases where the location of new infrastructure is not appealing to the local community, we hope that residents and council can work constructively with the proponent to find an agreeable solution."

Mr Connor said that tall towers are often required as the variable topography of Tasmania dictates the optimum height for the installations. Such towers are not without precedent elsewhere in Tasmania and Australia, many Tasmanian towns and cities already have similar towers.

"We are concerned that rejection of some development applications may lead to delays in the expansion of the network and significant coverage gaps if less than optimal sites are used, disadvantaging tourists and business people travelling in the area, as well as residents in those areas who may otherwise have had access to competitive telecommunications services."

"We ask that councils and councillors carefully consider the benefits that these new sites will provide to residents and visitors to their areas, such as more affordable broadband internet outside town limits; in some cases a halving of the cost for a comparable service."

"Visitors often come to Tasmania from the mainland and get a surprise that their mobile phone or broadband does not work in popular tourist regions."

Digital Tasmania is a consumer action group, created to give a voice to the views and needs of Tasmanian consumers in the digital age. <http://www.digitaltasmania.org>

Radio Frequency National Site Archive - Electromagnetic energy information <http://www.rfnsa.com.au>

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