

Media contact: Lauren McGinley
D: 02 9495 8904
M: 0416 245 478
E: lauren.mcginley@atug.org.au

www.atug.com.au

03/04/08



Australian
Telecommunications
Users Group

Media Release

Australia's regional broadband problem is still with us...since 2002 ATUG has been working on the problems end users wanting broadband services in regional Australia face everyday.

ATUG's Annual Regional Communications Roadshow, Annual Regional Conference and recent Broadband Awards keep ATUG up to date with the issues, needs and developments being made in regional communications.

To date ATUG has visited 56 regional centres and travelled 75,822 kilometres to speak with regional end users.

ATUG's vision reflects these conversations - for regional Australian communications users to have access to competitively priced, innovative, quality communications services that improve government services, community life and business outcomes.

ATUG viewed the OPEL initiative as an important part of the solution to the lack of communication services available to regional Australia.

ATUG is disappointed with the recent announcement by the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy, that the OPEL Networks broadband network will not proceed due to the OPEL Networks' Implementation Plan failing to meet the terms of a contract made with the previous Government.

ATUG's concerns with this decision are as follows;

- The big issue now is what is happening in regional areas? Where ISDN is being withdrawn end users wind up with a choice between dial-up and NextG, which currently does not offer metro comparable broadband pricing.
- End users say the Australian Broadband Guarantee (ABG) satellite service offering has functionality limitations and is too expensive ongoing.
- There are very few wireless options available to regional end users because of backhaul prices and changes to the ABG (on premise of OPEL), reduced service areas and subsidies meant providers who could have helped have now left the industry.

While ATUG supports the development of a National Broadband Network, ATUG does not believe it will reach 98% of Australian end users for a considerable time.

The announcement flagged a small opportunity to recast the ABG directed at 2% of the population. This needs to be broadened in scope, beyond satellite and scale, beyond 2%.

ATUG will continue to work on these issues with the Minister. We will be discussing the options at our 2008 Regional Conference for more information please go to www.atug.com.au/atug2008RegionalConf.cfm