

Optus and TPG Telecom to share mobile infrastructure in some Victorian builds

TPG Telecom and Optus are intending to share infrastructure including towers and, in some cases, antennas at some of the initial sites being funded by the Victoria government's mobile coverage program.

The new arrangement comes in the wake of TPG and Telstra striking their multi-operator core network and spectrum sharing deal, which has provoked vigorous opposition from Optus. The Australian Competition & Consumer Commission is currently consulting on this sharing agreement.

The Victorian Government said the shared infrastructure agreement "[gives] locals a choice of mobile providers and [improve] competition". The state government has started releasing a trickle of announcements with details of the upgrades and new builds being supported by the \$300 million mobile program, which is part of Connecting Victoria. The first areas to receive mobile upgrades as part of the Victorian program are Melton and Warrnambool.

The government has said in total some 1000 mobile sites will receive funding from Connecting Victoria, which in total is worth \$550 million and includes fixed broadband upgrades by NBN Co.

In NSW, the state government is sponsoring active network sharing trials. Along with Optus, Telstra and TPG, BAI Communications, FSG, OneWiFi & Infrastructure, NEC and Pivotel are participating in that program, which will test four different approaches to sharing: MOCN, roaming, multi-operator radio access network and Open RAN. For some projects covered by the first round, Optus will be the lead while for others TPG will be.

Late last month the Victorian government said that new and upgraded mobile infrastructure for Melton delivered by TPG and Optus would provide coverage for more than 150 square kilometres across Brookfield, Cobblebank, Aintree, Weir Views, Exford, Melton South and Toolern Vale. In total more than 27,500 people live and work in the region, the state government said. The new infrastructure will be deployed between 2024 and 2026.

"TPG Telecom is proud to co-invest with the Victorian Government on these important upgrades to communications infrastructure," said TPG Telecom general manager of technology strategy and innovation Yago Lopez (pictured right)

Optus president of regulatory and public affairs Andrew Sheridan



said: “Optus wishes to thank the Victorian Government for their significant investment which will go a long way in strengthening the mobile infrastructure in Melton.

Details of the new infrastructure for the greater Warrnambool area was announced this week, with Optus to upgrade seven mobile base stations from 4G to 5G. The sites provide coverage for 21,500 premises across 285 square kilometres in Allansford, Dennington and Warrnambool.

“This investment will be critical in hardening the mobile network, minimising connectivity outages and keeping more Victorians connected when it matters most,” Sheridan said. The upgrades are expected to be carried out between 2023 and 2024.

Further Connecting Victoria spend will be announced throughout June and into July by Victoria’s innovation and digital economy minister, Jaala Pulford. Announcements for a second round of mobile coverage upgrades are expected in October.

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