

Regional specialist Connected Farms will deliver fixed wireless and mobile broadband, including satellite backhaul, to the agricultural areas of Weddin Shire.

“This connectivity project is of great significance to the agricultural community of Weddin Shire as coverage of the area has been long neglected by the major telco operators,” Connected Farms CEO Tom Andrews told CommsDay.

NSW regional WISP YLess4U received funds to provide fixed wireless in six regions. Similarly Wi-Sky received funds for both NSW and Queensland projects. The former to upgrade its existing Southern NSW network including backhaul, and the latter to support the North West Queensland Gigabit Towns Project, providing both fixed wireless and community wi-fi.

Telstra also received \$34 million funding for 23 mobile coverage related projects, including a large installation on the Limestone Coast in South Australia near the Victorian border.

The highest funded recipient was NBN Co which received close to \$36 million, which will mainly support flipping satellite areas to fixed wireless, with the exception of a project in Harrietville, Victoria, where the area will shift from Sky Muster to FTTP. Among the areas gaining access to NBN wireless are Katherine, Torres Strait Islands, Magnetic Island and Cooper Pedy.

FIRST NATIONS FOCUS: Notably, Rowland’s announcement was made jointly with assistant indigenous Australians minister Malarndirri McCarthy.

They said that of the total \$170m plus allocation, \$54.8 million in funding across 44 projects would benefit First Nations communities. These projects will support progress towards achieving Target 17 of the Closing the Gap plan.

“The Regional Connectivity and Mobile Black Spot Programs will make a meaningful difference to rural, regional and First Nations communities across the country,” Rowland said.

She also said that the federal government funds would be complemented by \$106.25 million in co-investment from other parties.

Rohan Pearce

OneWiFi funded for 25-site neutral host network, Optus signs as anchor tenant

The federal government will help co-fund a major deployment of mobile neutral host infrastructure as part of Round 7 of the Mobile Black Spot Program, with Optus already signed on as an anchor tenant for a 25-site rollout by OneWiFi & Infrastructure. The government yesterday announced \$64 million in allocations for the new round, with Telstra supplying 35 new solutions, Optus two and OneWiFi the remainder.

OneWiFi commercial and strategy director Gary Tsang (pictured) told CommsDay that its neutral host plan built on its experience participating in the NSW government Active Sharing Partnership program. OneWiFi was announced last February as the first provider to receive funding as part of the initiative, supporting RAN-as-a-service sites in Brewarrina and Wilcannia. “They’re all completed in terms of the installation and



commissioning of the Radio Access Network component,” Tsang said. Using a scientific licence, OneWifi tested the infrastructure with 4G and 5G voice and data calls.

“We are in the process of connecting to the various mobile carriers who are going to be offering a service at those sites.”

Tsang said that OneWifi had also worked with the NSW government as part of the federal program, including identifying regional towns that are underserved “and also some of the First Nation communities which urgently need mobile coverage.”

He said that OneWifi was in discussions with national and regional MNOs about exploiting neutral host service.

“Optus is a strong supporter of multi-carrier solutions for regional infrastructure and we look forward to continuing to work with OneWiFi to bring further connectivity for Optus customers across regional and remote Australia,” an Optus spokesperson told CommsDay.

The 25 macrosites that have received a federal contribution have to be completed by 2026 under the terms of the RCP, Tsang said.

However, he added: “But having been out in the bush and visited and consulted with a lot of local government and communities and regional and New South Wales and Queensland during our travels, we got a lot of firsthand war stories about their struggles out there and we intimately understand that their dire needs for mobile coverage and multi-carrier mobile outcomes.”

He said OneWifi would be looking to rapidly deploy infrastructure over the next 12-24 months. “We’ve done that at Brewarrina, we’ve done that in Wilcannia. Both end-to-end building and commissioning took less than six months.”

Tsang said that the funding for a multi-carrier solution was a “transformational deal” for regional Australia: “More coverage, more consumer choice, more competition, but with less cost, less complexity and just really delivering the outcomes that regional Australia has been lacking.”

Rohan Pearce

Swoop switches on new Connecting Victoria services

Swoop has switched on fixed wireless infrastructure supporting services for Mount Baw Baw, Tanjil Bren and Icy Creek in Victoria, as part of a project funded by the state government’s \$500 million Connecting Victoria program. The rollout was also supported by Round 2 of the federal government’s Regional Connectivity Program.

Swoop CTO Tom Berryman told CommsDay that the telco was about to kick off marketing in the region, which is some two-and-a-half hours from Melbourne and home to the Mt. Baw Baw Alpine Resort.

“I think the demand in any regional area — or any area that’s outside of a regional town or off the main highway — it’s always a pretty high demand, but it’s not necessarily for fixed wireless. It’s just high demand for connectivity. And fixed wireless, in this case, is just the best way that we had to get to these people,” the CTO said.

The three localities “are pretty remote, and they’re subject to a lot of things like landslips as well, which can make fixed line connectivity quite challenging so wireless