

In Brief: Aussies outline rural broadband campaign

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Australia's long-awaited plan to expand rural broadband will involve two or three large-scale projects with an AUD3.1 billion (\$2.3 billion) price tag.

Communications Minister Helen Coonan said Thursday that the decision on who would get the funding would be made around the end of the year, and that industry consortiums and joint ventures would be welcome.

Initial expenditures will include about \$800 million in capital grants for various projects covered by the \$1.1 billion regional broadband fund, The Australian reported.

The program comes as the government is preparing to sell its stake in national telco Telstra. Coonan denied that involving Telstra's rival in the lucrative rural expansion plan would dilute Telstra's value.

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