

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SHEET • CONNECTIVITY

Why connectivity matters

The cables and links that carry Australia's digital life and why new ones keep being proposed

The key idea: connectivity is the third leg

Digital infrastructure stands on three legs: computing (data centres), energy to power it and **connectivity**, the cables and links that move data and electricity between where they're made and where they're needed. When a new cable, interconnector or transmission line is proposed near you, it's this third leg being built.

What connectivity actually is

Almost all of Australia's international internet traffic travels through a small number of **subsea fibre-optic cables**, not satellites. Within the country, data moves over fibre networks (including the NBN) and, increasingly, new domestic subsea routes linking capital cities. Electricity has its own connectivity: **interconnectors** and transmission lines that let regions share power, so surplus renewable energy in one place can serve demand in another.

Why more is being built

Demand for data keeps growing (AI, streaming, cloud services) and the energy transition needs new links to move renewable power from where it's generated to where it's used. Some projects carry both: modern interconnectors often bundle electricity and fibre-optic data cables in one route.

Who decides

Responsibility is shared. **Nationally:** the Australian Government approves projects with environmental impacts (EPBC Act) and regulates telecommunications and energy markets (ACMA, AER, AEMO). **State:** planning approval, environmental assessment and land access law. **Local:** councils handle local planning matters and are often the community's first point of contact. A sheet later in this series explains how to have your say at each level.

What good practice looks like

- A clear public explanation of why the link is needed and who benefits.
- Early, genuine consultation with landholders and communities on the route, before it is fixed.
- Fair, transparent compensation for hosting infrastructure, addressing long-term impacts, not just construction.
- Independent assessment of environmental effects, with findings published.

Questions to ask

Who benefits from this link and how will my community share in that benefit? What alternatives (including alternative routes) were considered? Who is the decision-maker at each approval stage and when can I comment?

Want to know more? Your local council, your state planning authority and the project proponent publish further information. This sheet is general information, not legal or planning advice; a specific proposal is confirmed by qualified assessment.