

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SHEET • CONNECTIVITY

Satellite connectivity — LEO and the end of 'no signal'

How low-orbit satellites are rewriting coverage and what lands on the ground near you

The key idea: the sky just joined the network

For decades satellite internet meant one thing: distant satellites, slow responses, last resort. **Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** constellations changed that. Thousands of small satellites a few hundred kilometres up, instead of 36,000 km, cut delay enough for video calls and everyday work. For regional Australia and for the digital economy's reach beyond the fibre map, this is the biggest connectivity shift in a generation.

Two kinds of satellite service

Fixed dishes: NBN's Sky Muster (traditional high-orbit) and LEO services like Starlink connect homes and businesses via a dish.

Direct-to-device: newer LEO satellites talk straight to an ordinary mobile phone. Texting via satellite went live for Australian customers in 2025, with voice and more carriers following. No dish, no new tower: coverage falls from the sky.

Australia's world-first obligation

Legislation passed in November 2025 creates a **Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation**: from late 2027, carriers must provide baseline outdoor SMS and voice coverage across some five million square kilometres, using their networks plus LEO direct-to-device services. Australia is the first country to mandate universal outdoor mobile coverage. For communities long outside the coverage map, the question shifts from *whether* to *how well and what it costs*. (Status current at July 2026.)

What lands on the ground

Constellations still need earth infrastructure: **gateway stations**, clusters of dishes on a few hectares, that pull traffic down and hand it to the fibre network. Gateways favour sites with clear sky, available power and good fibre; they are quiet, low-rise neighbours and they bring a bonus: the fibre and power built to serve them can seed further digital infrastructure in a region. A gateway near a community is generally an asset worth understanding, not fearing.

What good practice looks like

- Clear local explanation of what a gateway or dish farm is and what it isn't.
- Fibre and power built for gateways planned so the region can share the benefit.
- Honest performance claims: satellite complements fibre and towers, it doesn't replace them for heavy use.
- Service prices and fair-use limits stated plainly for rural customers.

Questions to ask

What will satellite coverage actually deliver here: texting, calls, broadband? What ground infrastructure is proposed nearby and does its fibre route open other doors for our region? What happens to service quality as more users share the constellation?

Want to know more? The ACMA and DITRDCA publish universal-service and direct-to-device updates; NBN Co covers Sky Muster; providers publish coverage maps. *Last checked: July 2026*. This sheet is general information, not legal or planning advice; a specific proposal is confirmed by qualified assessment.