



Australian Society of Ophthalmologists

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian Society of Ophthalmologists Incorporated ABN 29 454 001 424

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RURAL PATIENTS WILL MISS OUT IF GILLARD FAILS TO DELIVER BROADBAND PARITY TO THE BUSH

In the wake of the Federal Government's National e-Health Conference, the Australian Society of Ophthalmologists, representing 600 ophthalmologists throughout the country – many of whom deliver services to rural and remote parts of the country – has called on the Gillard Government to offer a guarantee that its National Broadband Network will have a single wholesale price nationwide.

The call comes as concern grows among doctors and allied health professionals working in rural and remote communities about the likelihood of an equitable rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

ASO spokesperson Dr Bill Glasson, who is also chair of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee currently assessing the adequacy of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia, said plans for improved access to specialist medical services would be stunted if the cost of high speed broadband is made more expensive outside urban centres.

"Technology such as high speed internet presents the opportunity to make huge advances in how healthcare is delivered to patients living in rural and remote communities," Dr Glasson said.

"It enables 'real-time' consultations between General Practitioners and their patients, and Specialists, allowing for faster and more effective specialist diagnosis and treatment," he said.

"This also cuts down on the significant cost of transporting outback patients to regional and metropolitan centres for assessment by a Specialist."

The Federal Government has a duty to ensure the NBN offers price parity across the country so these advances in healthcare delivery can continue to occur, according to the ASO.

"Rural patients deserve to have the same level of access to high quality healthcare as their city counterparts," Dr Glasson said.

The ASO recently launched the Indigenous and Remote Eye Health Service (IRIS) aiming to enhance the delivery of efficient and sustainable specialist eye health services into indigenous and remote communities.



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Dr Glasson said services like IRIS would be made even more effective by improved high-speed internet access.

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Contact: *ASO Media Spokesperson Dr Bill Glasson 0427 757 375*

ASO Media Advisor Sarah Todman on 0425 883 304