

SATELLITE PHONE SUBSIDY SCHEME

As part of its initial response package to the Regional Telecommunications Review, the Rudd Government is providing \$11.4 million to extend and enhance the *Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme*.

Objective

For a large part of Australia's landmass, satellite phones are the only available form of mobile communications. However, satellite phones are more expensive than terrestrial mobile phones.

The *Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme* improves the affordability of mobile communications for people living and working in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage, by providing increased subsidies for the purchase of satellite phone handsets.

The Scheme commenced in 2002 and had been scheduled to close on 30 June 2009. The new funding of \$11.4 million is available over four years from 1 July 2009.

Program enhancements

Subsidy levels

The subsidy level has been increased for people who live in areas without access to terrestrial mobile phone coverage - from 60 per cent of the handset to 85 per cent. The cap on individual subsidies remains at \$1000 per handset.

Replacement handsets

Applicants who live in areas without terrestrial mobile coverage are now eligible for additional subsidies to replace handsets purchased under the Scheme three or more years earlier.

Health and emergency service organisations

Health and emergency service organisations, which could previously access up to two handset subsidies under the Scheme, are able to access subsidies for additional handsets if they can demonstrate a need for more handsets.

Further details

New guidelines and application forms are now available. For any further information please contact the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy on 1800 674 058, or email satphone@dbcde.gov.au or www.dbcde.gov.au/satphone.

Regional Telecommunications Review

The independent Regional Telecommunications Review chaired by Dr Bill Glasson, AO, undertook extensive consultation and evaluation of the adequacy of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Australia. The enhanced *Satellite Phone Subsidy Scheme* is part of the Government's initial response to the Review.