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NZRGPN applauds faster UFB and RBI extension to rural towns

Today's announcement by the Government to roll out Ultra-Fast Broadband to 190 more small towns and extend rural broadband to another 74,000 households and businesses earlier than planned is further recognition of the economic importance of rural and regional New Zealand.

Enhanced and earlier than planned access to fast and reliable broadband in rural New Zealand will be welcomed by rural medical practices, businesses, communities and individuals alike, says New Zealand Rural General Practice Network deputy Chief Executive Linda Reynolds.

"We need to ensure that the cost of getting the fibre or cable from the 'gate' to the home or business is affordable and not a barrier. Anecdotally we have heard of exorbitant quotes being received by rural people to be connected to the UFB once it has been established in their community. This barrier to access needs to be removed and reasonable charges applied to this most fundamental of services.

"It is heartening to see that the Government is exceeding its earlier commitment that by 2025, 99 percent of New Zealanders should be able to access broadband at peak speeds of at least 50 Mbps and the remaining 1 percent able to access 10 Mbps.

"It is also extremely pleasing that, as part of the \$140 million tagged to extend rural coverage of high speed broadband under the RBI initiative announced today, mobile coverage will be increased on 1000 kilometres of rural highways and 100 tourist areas. This is an important development for rural general practice teams and rural emergency services operating in areas that have previously been communication black spots.

"Rural New Zealand is and will remain the backbone of the New Zealand economy. The farming, agriculture and horticulture sectors along with the tourist sector are vital to this country's economic and social wellbeing.

"Good broadband is something that people in urban areas expect. Rural communities and the people working within them are no different. Whether it's the rural medical centre, farm, business or school, rural people expect to be connected to the rest of New Zealand and indeed the world in this day and age."

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