

**nbn**’s submission on 3.4GHz band spectrum licensing designation

20 October 2020



**Public**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed designation of part of the 3.4 GHz band spectrum (from 3400 – 3575 MHz) for spectrum licensing.

**nbn**’s spectrum requirements are developed to ensure that it meets the Federal Government’s expectation that all Australians have access to very fast broadband as soon as possible, at affordable prices, and at least cost to taxpayers, and that upgrade paths are available as required. The flexibility of the multi-technology mix approach enables **nbn** to build the network using the technology best matched to each area of Australia, and spectrum requirements are determined in this context.

**nbn** has rolled out a fixed wireless network that services Australians in homes and business including in the metro-fringe, rural and regional areas. The critical role that **nbn**’s services play in the community and the value of

connectedness has been highlighted in **nbn**’s recent bushfire recovery activities and during the COVID-19 crisis. As at 8 October 2020, there were approximately 330,000 homes and businesses with an active fixed wireless service.1

**nbn** supports the proposed designation of part of the 3.4 GHz band spectrum that will ultimately enable contiguity to a significant part of **nbn**’s holdings in the 3.4 GHz band (described as Option 3b, phase 1 in the ACMA’s Decision Paper).2

For historical reasons, the 3.4/3.5 GHz bands spectrum (3400 – 3575 MHz) is fragmented and inefficiently configured. **nbn** agrees that the mix of apparatus and spectrum licences has created regulatory, commercial, and technical barriers to trading in the band. The optimisation of these bands will result in broader benefits for industry due to the improved spectral efficiency and availability of network technology upgrade options. This will consequently increase the overall public benefit derived from the relevant spectrum.

**nbn** also agrees that the proposed designation will further the Government’s stated policy objectives. Specifically,

**nbn** considers that it will:

* support the efficient allocation and use of spectrum;
* facilitate flexible spectrum management;
* support the rollout of 5G technologies; and
* improve broadband access for all Australians.

# [C-I-C] [C-I-C]

We consider that:

* Attachment B of the Consultation Paper accurately sets out the areas covered by **nbn**’s PTS apparatus

licences as defined by the HCIS identifiers to be converted to spectrum licences.

* Attachment C of the Consultation Paper accurately sets out the proposed urban excise areas. The suitability of the proposed urban excise areas is subject to the interference management framework which is still to be defined.

The interference management framework used in respect of the proposed excise of inner metro areas needs to ensure that there is no increase in interference potential to **nbn** sites, and should not limit future deployment and technical planning options relevant to capacity augmentations for **nbn**. **[C-i-C] [C-i-C]**

1 https[://www.nbnco.com.au/content/dam/nbnco2/2019/documents/weekly-progress-report/Public\_Progress\_Data%20-%20081020.pdf](http://www.nbnco.com.au/content/dam/nbnco2/2019/documents/weekly-progress-report/Public_Progress_Data%20-%20081020.pdf)

2 https[://www.acma.gov.au/consultations/2019-08/optimising-3400-3575-mhz-band-consultation-122019](http://www.acma.gov.au/consultations/2019-08/optimising-3400-3575-mhz-band-consultation-122019)

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# [C-i-C] [C-i-C]

We note that the defragmentation of **nbn** and Optus’s holdings in the 3.4GHz band that will be enabled by the

Minister’s Spectrum Designation will defragment a significant part but not all of **nbn**’s holdings in this band. **nbn**’s existing spectrum holdings in more regional areas (3442.5-3475 MHz, 3542.5-3575 MHz) will continue to be fragmented and there would be benefit in having these holdings made contiguous. We understand that the ACMA is considering the potential of the proposed *Radiocommunications Act 1992 (Cth)* amendments to enable the defragmentation of **nbn**’s remaining holdings.