



# nbn's submission on 850 / 900 MHz band auction draft instruments

28 May 2021



Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issues as set out in the 'Draft instruments for the 850/900 MHz band auction, Consultation paper, April 2021' as well as other issues more generally relevant to the allocation of 850 / 900 MHz band spectrum licences.

**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.

**[C-i-C] [C-i-C]**

Regarding the proposed early access arrangements, we note our request under consideration for our scientific licences in the 850 MHz expansion band to be renewed till October 2022 under section 153P of the *Radiocommunications Act*. The ability to continue to use this spectrum for the duration of the Alternative Voice Services trial is critical to the success of this trial and customer experience. We have also factored in some additional time to allow a smooth transition to another service for end users participating in the trial and wishing to utilise a non-legacy service at the conclusion of the trial.

Below are our views on the draft allocation instruments and draft technical instruments.

#### **Draft allocation instruments (allocation determination)**

- Upfront payment:
  - We request that the ACMA consider enabling the payment of spectrum licences on an instalment basis. We propose that the total winning price could be divided into yearly instalments to be paid annually. We consider that this would also further the Government's stated policy objective of encouraging investment in regional telecommunications infrastructure.<sup>1</sup>
  - **[C-i-C] [C-i-C]**
- **[C-i-C] [C-i-C]**

#### **Draft allocation instruments (marketing plan)**

- Sample licence: We support the proposed sample licence, including the proposed conditions.
- Licence commencement: We support the proposed commencement date of licences of 1 July 2024.
- Licence duration: We support the proposed 20 year duration.
- Renewal statement: We support the proposed renewal statements.
- Frequency lot configuration: We support the proposed frequency lot configuration.
- Geographic lot configuration:
  - We support the ACMA dividing the 850 MHz expansion band into a single metropolitan area (comprising the 5 mainland state capital cities and Canberra) and a single regional area covering all other areas given the potential opportunity that this presents for a party to acquire spectrum focusing on remote, rural, regional and metro fringe use cases therefore maximising the overall public benefit derived from the spectrum. This is as opposed to allocating the 850MHz expansion band as a single national lot which we do not support and consider could lead to an inefficient allocation of spectrum where demand / use cases in non-metropolitan areas are subsequently unable to be supported.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.communications.gov.au/documents/communications-policy-objectives-allocation-850-and-900-mhz-bands>



- We support the proposed position of the boundaries between the metropolitan lot and the regional lot. We note that the 850 MHz band and 850MHz Expansion Band use frequency division duplex (FDD) and this use of paired spectrum significantly reduces the risk of dead zones at licence boundaries, avoiding significant loss of utility when geographic boundaries are allocated and adjacent spectrum licensees operate in adjacent geographies within a single band.

**Draft technical instruments**

- We support the proposed technical framework.