

RDA NT Wireless Project

The *High Speed Wireless Technology Pilot* has connected the remote Indigenous communities of Engawala and Atitjere to Vocus (previously Nextgen) fibre via long-distance point-to-point microwave links. Some of the benefits of the fibre network, which runs north-south along the Stuart Highway servicing the Territory's largest communities, have now been shared with some of the Territory's smallest communities. The trial examines the potential advantages of this wireless service over existing and unsatisfactory satellite services.

Narrowing the digital divide is critical to enabling rural and remote economic development. While existing satellite options provide a baseline service in low population areas there are shortfalls to satellite technology. High speed wireless may better support data and voice connectivity and e-service delivery. This project tests the capability and affordability of alternative technology.

The project is well progressed. Distant Curve has installed, commissioned, and tested the six relay points. All throughput design parameters were exceeded – final throughput exceeded 300Mbps aggregate (design 80Mbps), latency was < 6ms (design 12ms) and jitter was less than 1ms. The total length of links is around 320kms, the longest link was 53kms. The wireless service was delivered on 15 December 2016.

Most project challenges have been administrative rather than technical. The biggest barrier has been operating within the remote telecommunications market where there is traditionally little or no competition. The project has demonstrated the potential of alternative technology solutions and lessons learnt will be readily transferrable across Northern Australia.

This project offers practical lessons to inform current policy development. Opportunities are now being explored to disseminate the learnings and expand the project from the initial pilot.

