

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business

Minister for Resources



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BOOSTING AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION WITH MOBILE COVERAGE

Farmers and residents in one of Victoria's most productive horticultural regions will soon have better mobile coverage, allowing them to use new technology to improve their efficiency.

The Andrews Labor Government has invested \$3.2 million to partner with Telstra and Olam Orchards to improve mobile coverage between Wemen and Beverford in northern Victoria, including along a 40 kilometre stretch of the Murray Valley Highway.

The area is home to Olam, Australia's biggest almond producer and one of the region's biggest employers, which uses modern agricultural technology such as sensors to gather data and manage its orchards.

Olam will benefit greatly from the improved coverage and connections, which will also allow it to increase its use of robotics in everyday farm activities, including pest spraying and harvesting.

Other local growers will also benefit from the improved connectivity, which will continue to seed further innovations in agricultural business.

The connection boost will involve the construction of three new 4G mobile base stations at Annuello, Wandown and Beverford, and a new 4G mobile small cell at Woorinen South – which will give better 4G mobile coverage to about 2,650 homes and businesses.

Better mobile coverage will improve safety, attract new residents to the area and improve day-to-day experiences at home and at work.

Since 2014, the Government has funded 253 new mobile base stations across the state. More than 200 of these are up and running, providing faster, stronger and more reliable connections.

The Government is also fast-tracking boosts to mobile coverage and broadband through the \$550 million *Connecting Victoria* program.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"Partnerships like this create so much value for our regions. Farmers can work more efficiently and sustainably, new types of jobs are created, and communities can grow and become more connected."

"As well as supporting business, this improved coverage will help locals by giving them vital links to their families, community, education and work."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp

"This project will be a fantastic boost for businesses and farmers in the region, who rely on having good internet and mobile connections to expand and grow."

Quote attributable to a Telstra Regional General Manager Steve Tinker

"This innovative partnership will see us deliver four new mobile sites to improve coverage across northern Victoria and boost connectivity for agri-businesses, locals and those travelling through the region."

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