

ADSL broadband back in ISPs' plans

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Broadband

INTERNET providers have begun to revisit plans to introduce fast ADSL broadband, abandoned after Telstra announced last year that it intended to build a fibre network.

TPG Internet is to install ADSL2+ equipment in 17 new exchange sites and Primus Telecom Australia will consider resuming a rollout it put on hold last year. A spokesman for Primus Telecom Australia managing director Greg Wilson said the carrier had halted the second phase of its plans last year in anticipation of Telstra's plans.

Telstra, however, announced last week that it had abandoned its fibre-to-the-node plans after negotiations with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission collapsed.

"Primus sees this as one element of the uncertainty that has been finalised," the spokesman said.

It was waiting on the ACCC's final ruling on the unbundled local loop pricing and, provided it offered a level of certainty, it would resume or start the next phase of its DSLAM rollout.

liNet managing director Michael Malone said Telstra's fibre plans and uncertainty over pricing had inhibited plans.

"I'd say, generally, for the whole industry, the talks going on continuously have been a deterrent to anyone investing in the Unbundled Local Loop or Line Sharing Services," he said.

liNet would continue to focus on boosting its present network footprint until pricing issues had been resolved, he said.

Optus, which has installed ADSL2+ in about 150 exchanges, has remained tight-lipped about its plans, but industry observers say it is keen to push them ahead.

Telecommunications research director for analyst Ovum, David Kennedy, said uncertainty over Telstra's fibre plans would not impede broadband access. "Tel-

tra's competitors have already got plans in place to put DSL infrastructure in exchanges," Mr Kennedy said.

"That has been slowed down by current uncertainty but it's certainly not stopping."

It's not clear whether Telstra will revive its FTTN plans.

Late last week its corporate affairs executives insisted the plans had been cancelled, but chief executive Sol Trujillo said at the weekend that the fibre network may still go ahead if the carrier was given the right regulatory environment.

Mr Kennedy said Telstra was unlikely to be able to revisit its fibre plans for at least a year.