

COMMWORX GETS THE ROLLOUT ROLLING

With Australia’s National Broadband Network picking up pace across the country, *Trenchless Australasia* speaks to Adam Dobb and Cheyne Lennon from contracting company Commworx about their experience cabling on the vast project.

A: Commworx Director’s Adam Dobb (left) and Cheyne Lennon (right).



The National Broadband Network (NBN), which has been the subject of much political debate in Australia, is valued at \$56 billion and is expected to be completed by June 2021. The high-speed broadband network uses a combination of Fibre-to-the-Node (FTTN) and Fibre-to-the-Premises (FTTP) installation techniques. The NBN rollout is being led by the Australian government under the banner of nbn™ co. Commworx is one of a number of contractors in Australia working on the

National Broadband Network (NBN) roll-out. The company was founded in 2013 and is co-owned by Adam Dobb and Cheyne Lennon, who have experience in the cabling and data industries respectively. Since its founding, the company has grown to have 57 staff and at the time of writing was installing 160-170 new build FTTP. Mr Dobb says “I wouldn’t like to speculate on whether others are working at our pace across the NBN, but there is no subcontractor in our region or surrounding regions that delivers this amount of work.”

The NBN has very tight installation rates and profit margins, meaning that Mr Dobb and Mr Lennon have to keep a tight hold of the reins to make Commworx profitable. Mr Dobb comments “NBN rates are tight and staff need to be managed daily with productivity targets and key performance indicators. The volume of work we are doing helps with the small profit margins, but it is also important that we are meeting quality and compliance standards to prevent return visits at our cost.” Commworx has seen the benefits of Trenchless Technology in the NBN rollout; the company has been using pneumatic piercing tools to complete NBN installation work. Mr Dobb says “This less destructive small piercing tool provides a neat finish that allows us to work in tighter areas that would normally be too hard to excavate. This ensure that we can neatly and safely bore under any obstacles.” In terms of equipment selection, Mr Dobb has worked with a number of tools and has found that HammerHead equipment works best for Commworx’s purposes. “Since the beginning of the NBN project we have been using pneumatic

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piercing tools. It saves on reinstatement and client disruptions. All that has changed for us in recent times is that we have moved to the HammerHead pneumatic tools as we have found they have less service faults.” The fact that HammerHead tools can be locally serviced is another benefit in Mr Dobb’s eyes. Commworx currently has a fleet of 14 pneumatic tools, six 130 cfm compressors, a Ditch Witch trenching machine for work in rural areas, as well as a number of service locators, gas detectors and other tools that make our workplace safe and efficient. After the NBN rollout is complete, Mr Dobb and Mr Lennon’s vision is that

Commworx will continue to work in the trenchless sector. “Apart from our civil construction arm, we have copper jointers, excavation and fibre splicers on our team. We are looking to utilise these skills in the coming years. Councils and utilities may use us in the future for service location projects, civil construction work and more,” says Mr Dobb. At the time of writing, over 800,000 premises had been connected to the NBN with New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria leading the way in terms of active installation numbers. In late 2015 nbn™ co released a statement estimating that the network will have reached 9.5 million homes by September 2018. T

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