



Government of Papua New Guinea

National Information & Communications
Technology Authority

MEDIA STATEMENT

Official Announcement of 5G Readiness in Papua New Guinea

Friday, 4th September 2026

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is a very exciting day. It is a milestone for the digital economy, and indeed the broader economy, of Papua New Guinea.

I am very pleased to announce that today NICTA is ready to licence for 5G mobile services in Papua New Guinea. With the licensing of this spectrum, according to Global Mobile Suppliers Association (GSA), PNG joins more than 150 countries globally who have launched or soft-launched 5G networks as at July 2026. Across the Asia-Pacific region, 5G adoption continues to accelerate, with operators recognising the transformative role that advanced mobile networks play in driving economic growth, innovation and digital inclusion. Today, Papua New Guinea takes its place among those nations embracing the next generation of digital connectivity.

Today's announcement is not the result of a single decision. Rather, it is the culmination of an extensive legal, technical and regulatory process undertaken by NICTA over several years. As the national regulator, NICTA has a statutory responsibility to ensure that spectrum, as a scarce national resource, is allocated transparently, efficiently and in the public interest. Before reaching this decision, NICTA conducted detailed spectrum planning and market assessments, reviewed international best practice, consulted with industry stakeholders, assessed future demand for mobile broadband services, and developed an appropriate licensing framework to support investment and innovation while safeguarding competition.

Throughout this process, NICTA has been guided by three key principles: first, that spectrum must be used efficiently to maximise benefits to Papua New Guinea; second, that regulatory decisions must promote fair competition and encourage investment in network infrastructure; and third, that all Papua New Guineans, regardless of where they live, should ultimately benefit from improved access to modern communications services. Following

this rigorous assessment, NICTA determined that the licensing of High Demand Spectrum in the 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz bands is in the best interests of consumers, industry and the nation.

NICTA has completed all due process on 5G spectrum bands – for both the internationally harmonised 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz spectrum band NICTA is formally confirming that the 5G spectrum band is now available to be licensed to qualified mobile operators in Papua New Guinea. This marks an important regulatory milestone for the industry. By making these bands available, NICTA is providing the regulatory certainty necessary for operators to plan, invest and deploy next-generation mobile networks and services. NICTA expects that other PNG mobile operators will also be licensed for High Demand Spectrum in due course, ensuring that the benefits of this spectrum are realised across the broader telecommunications sector.

The decision to license both the 2.6 GHz and 3.5 GHz bands reflects NICTA's commitment to the principle of technological neutrality. These spectrum bands will enable operators to deploy both advanced 4G and 5G services using technologies best suited to their business and customer needs. Larger contiguous spectrum assignments will improve network efficiency, reduce deployment costs, support greater capacity, and enhance the overall quality of mobile broadband services. This will allow operators to deliver faster speeds, lower latency, greater reliability and improved customer experiences across a growing range of digital applications and services.

Importantly, today's decision is fully **aligned with the Government's broader digital transformation agenda**. Reliable and affordable high-speed connectivity is now essential infrastructure for economic development, public service delivery and social inclusion. The deployment of 5G networks will support the Government's efforts to digitise public services, strengthen e-government platforms, expand digital education opportunities, improve healthcare delivery through digital solutions, enable innovation within the private sector, and support the growth of Papua New Guinea's digital economy. In short, this is not simply a telecommunications initiative; it is a nation-building initiative.

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For businesses, improved connectivity will increase productivity, support cloud computing and digital services, facilitate electronic commerce, and strengthen links with regional and global markets. For citizens, it will mean better access to information, education, financial services, entertainment and government services. For investors, it demonstrates Papua New Guinea's commitment to modern digital infrastructure and a stable, predictable regulatory environment.

It is important to emphasise that this High Demand Spectrum is being licensed for a fair and reasonable fee. The revenue generated from these licences will not simply remain within the regulatory system. NICTA intends to use these resources to support initiatives that extend digital connectivity to underserved and unserved communities. In this way, the commercial success of advanced mobile services in urban areas will help fund greater connectivity opportunities in rural and remote parts of Papua New Guinea.

While the initial deployment of 5G services is expected to focus on urban centres where demand is greatest, NICTA has incorporated clear rollout obligations into the licensing framework to ensure that the benefits of these spectrum assignments are progressively extended to a broader proportion of the population. [Vodafone PNG] has committed to delivering high-quality 5G services throughout the National Capital District and at least one additional city within 18 months, reaching at least 20 per cent of Papua New Guinea's population within 36 months and at least 30 per cent within 60 months.

Furthermore, NICTA has negotiated additional public-interest obligations requiring each mobile operator that acquires High Demand Spectrum to extend 4G coverage to 20 new sites identified under the Universal Access and Service programme. These commitments directly support the Government's objective of reducing the digital divide and ensuring that connectivity benefits are shared more broadly throughout the country.

Strong regulatory oversight will continue after today's announcement. All rollout commitments, coverage obligations and quality-of-service requirements will be independently audited. Where operators fail to meet their obligations, enforcement mechanisms and penalties will apply. This reflects NICTA's commitment to transparency, accountability and good governance in the management of national spectrum resources.

What Happens Next?

Today's licence issuance represents the beginning of a new phase rather than the end of the process. Following this announcement,

NICTA will continue to work closely with licensed operators to facilitate the deployment of services, monitor compliance with licence conditions, and ensure that consumers receive the benefits anticipated from these investments. NICTA will oversee spectrum utilisation, monitor network performance and quality of service, and ensure that rollout commitments are achieved within agreed timeframes.

NICTA will also continue progressing the next phases of spectrum reform and digital infrastructure development. This includes making additional High Demand Spectrum bands available where appropriate, supporting future satellite and non-terrestrial network services, expanding opportunities for licence-exempt and Wi-Fi services, and ensuring that Papua New Guinea's spectrum management framework remains aligned with international best practice and future technological developments.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the dedicated team at NICTA whose professionalism, expertise and commitment have made today's announcement possible. Their work has ensured that this important national resource is being managed in a manner that delivers long-term benefits for consumers, industry and the country as a whole.

Today marks an important milestone in Papua New Guinea's digital journey. Through careful regulation, responsible spectrum management and continued collaboration between Government, industry and the regulator, we are laying the foundations for a more connected, more competitive and more digitally empowered Papua New Guinea. We at NICTA remain committed to being responsible custodians of the nation's spectrum resources and champions of affordable, reliable and inclusive connectivity for all Papua New Guineans, wherever they may live.

Thank you.

Brian Riches
NICTA Board Chairman