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UCG plans ANZ expansion on back of NBN, UFB boom

Brisbane-headquartered Universal Communications Group has been quietly expanding, fuelled by valuable contracts with both NBN and Chorus to help deploy both countries' national networks. Now, the firm is looking at further growth options on both sides of the Tasman – including potentially supporting the deployment of mobile infrastructure like small cells and microcells.

The UCG brand name has been around since 1995, though it originally specialised in pay TV work, a part of the business sold to Hills Industries in the early 2000s. Since 2008, the company has focused on end-to-end design, cabling and construction for broadband across a range of access technologies, from fibre and HFC to wireless and even satellite VSAT systems.



UCG has been working with NBN in Australia for the last five years, particularly on challenging multi-dwelling units, having designed and cabled over 5,500 brownfields and 150 greenfields MDUs – with a total of almost 70,000 end user premises between them.

It's also been involved in HFC MDU trials in Brisbane. Notably, it's worked with NBN both before and after the 2013 change of government and the resulting switch to a multi-technology model.

“We've got a great relationship with NBN – we're just cracking on with it,” CEO and founder Ralf Luna told CommsDay. “The reality is that in a project of this length, there are going to be changes. And you've got to be able to adjust.”

More recently, UCG's business has been taking off in New Zealand. As reported in CommsDay, it won a 10-year tender with Chorus last June to connect UFB services in

MDUs; since scoring that deal, it's connected the UFB to 1,132 MDUs with over 27,000 premises.

Luna is now looking to grow the business further in both New Zealand and Australia, whether with NBN or the other telcos. "I see the opportunity, I see the changing market, and I'll make sure that I drive my businesses towards that," he said. "It's no different with NBN... there's phenomenal growth, phenomenal opportunity for growth."

And as part of UCG's future growth, Luna is also eyeing the mobile sector. "Particularly in the small cell type of deployment, I think our skill set would be a perfect fit for that type of market," he said.

Petroc Wilton