

Northern Minerals and business nbn™ Satellite Service

How we connected a remote mining site with the rest of Australia

Northern Minerals Limited

Industry: Mining

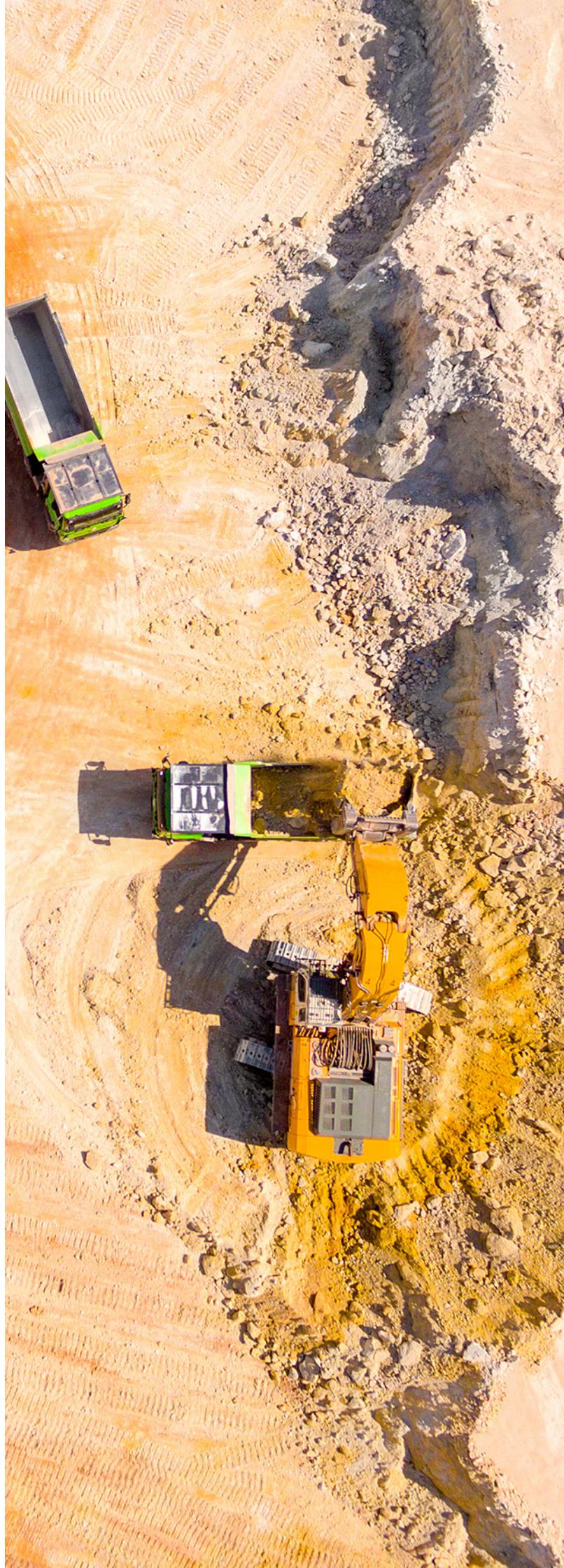
Solution: business nbn™ Satellite Service

Challenge

- Get business-grade internet in the remote northern Tanami region
 - Ensure employees can keep in contact with loved ones away from the site
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The Outcome

Increased morale, reliable internet-based applications, increased productivity



Getting one of Australia's most isolated locations online

Finding the right employees for a role is tough in most industries, but it can be especially difficult in mining. Whether candidates are able and willing to work in remote locations away from family and friends is often just as important as the skills and experience they bring to a site.

The Browns Range Pilot Plant, which is owned and operated by Northern Minerals Limited, is located in northern Western Australia, 160 kilometres to the south east of Halls Creek. Operating in such an isolated location makes attracting and retaining employees one of the key challenges for the business.

Historically, money was the key metric that fly in-fly out (FIFO) employees considered when choosing an employer. These days, however, other factors impact the decision on whether to take or stay in a job, said Robin Jones, Chief Operating Officer at Northern Minerals. "Mental health, accommodation, facilities, food, rosters, entertainment, and communications are now major determinants in an employee's consideration process."



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*Robin Jones
Chief Operating Officer,
Northern Minerals*

Delivering on connectivity

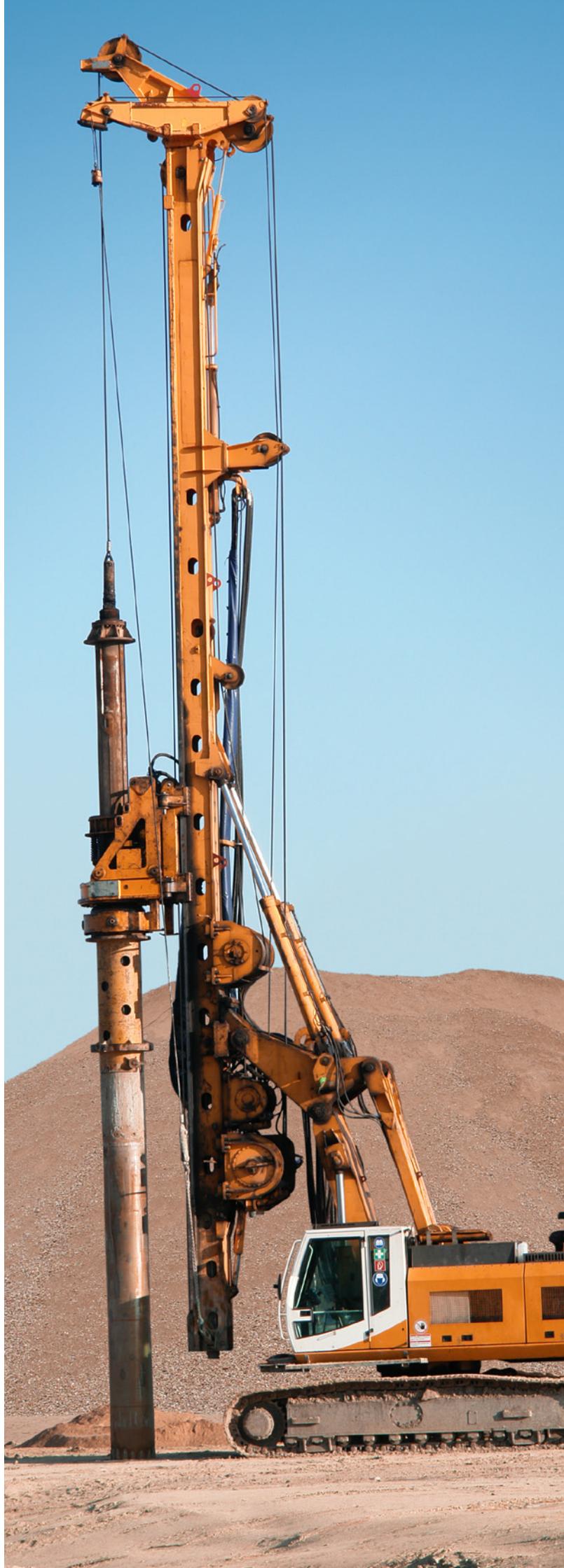
Part of keeping employees engaged and positive means providing them with a reliable means of keeping in touch with loved ones. At the Brown Range Project, where there are about 55 people on site at any time, the internet isn't just a way for employees to stream movies and music— it's their connection to the rest of the world.

Delivering on connectivity, however, is easier said than done. In this remote part of the country, telecommunications coverage is limited and hasn't been consistent in the past, but Northern Minerals knew that it wanted to improve its services for employees.

Vocus was initially recommended to Northern Minerals by the company's IT service provider. Because of the site's location, Vocus suggested business **nbn**[™] Satellite Service (BSS) for internet access. This new service allows retail service providers like Vocus to offer regional and remote businesses outside of nbn's fixed line network the ability to experience business-grade network services via satellite.

BSS has 58 spot beams covering 93 per cent of Australia along with some offshore islands. This allows each spot beam to provide high bandwidth to locales that traditionally have struggled to access consistent internet connectivity.

"We made the decision to move our services over to Vocus because of the company's strong presence in the mining industry, expertise in connecting remote sites, and previous positive experiences using Vocus," Jones said. "When looking at the Brown Range Pilot Plant, Vocus suggested considering the nbn business satellite internet service. It made sense to initially enter a PoC trial and then, following completion, move across to the live service to keep things streamlined."



The benefits of being online

During a trial period late last year, Northern Minerals tested out the satellite solution to see how it performed against the incumbent satellite service. Right away, the benefits were clear.

“Morale increased when the site came online,” said Jones. “Being able to keep in contact with people at home is hugely important to all employees. The ability to reliably use internet-based applications or bring your own content via streaming services makes a huge difference in a remote location like ours. Our employees are able to FaceTime and talk to loved ones without the service dropping out or being overloaded by volume.”

Productivity has also improved onsite, Jones said. “Remote systems including our data historian and accounting package work quite well over the new satellite—it’s a significant improvement over the previous satellite service we had.”

Pleased with the results, at the end of the trial period in November 2019, Northern Minerals signed on for a 12-month term with Vocus.

VOCUS

