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Broadband THE first high-rise apartments have been connected to the national broadband network (NBN) using the cheaper, multi-technology approach taken by the Coalition government.

Trials have begun in eight high-rise Melbourne buildings of fibre-to-the-building (FTTB) technology that runs fibre optic cable to the basement, then uses existing **copper** telephone wires to connect individual apartments and offices.

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The **company** building the network, NBN Co, has signed up service providers Telstra, Optus, iiNet and M2 for the three-month trial. NBN Co chief technology officer Gary McLaren said the trial would evaluate the construction, performance and customer experience of FTTB.

Internet users taking part in the trial will need to obtain a new modem from their internet service provider.

Privatised post CUSTOMERS and employees could own Australia Post under a radical plan to deliver long-term returns to the government and improved services to the community.

The proposal put forward by a former adviser to the UK government during last year's privatisation of the Royal Mail focuses on making consumer services the centre of any improvement rather than a one-off cash injection to bolster the budget bottom line.

Mutuo chief executive Peter Hunt said the federal government needs to be "honest and upfront" about the reasons for any planned privatisation.

The float price in any privatisation is also key with widespread anger in the UK that the Royal Mail was sold off cheap — it is trading at a 70 per cent premium to its November float price.

This comes as Australia Post managing director Ahmed Fahour warns the postal service will soon be unable to pay dividends to the federal government as losses in its letters business surge.

The federal government is believed to be looking to follow Britain's **lead** and privatise Australia's postal service, which has assets worth about $4.2 **billion**.

Weaker aussie The Aussie dollar is weaker as **Chinese** economic and credit concerns steer investors away from riskier assets, trading at US89.53 cents yesterday, down from US90.26 cents.

Declines on Asian **equity** markets and in **copper** prices signal concerns among investors about **Chinese** economic growth and troubles with its financial system, FXCM market analyst David de Ferranti said.

"There is some risk aversion weakening the Aussie, which is a risk sensitive currency," he said."The bond default in **China** last week and poor trade figures at the weekend have added to concerns about **China**'s economic growth and the quality of credit over there."

* Asset allocation — relative exposure to asset classes such as global shares, Asian shares, Australian shares, **bonds**, unlisted property and cash — has made a comeback, and the reason is the Global Financial Crisis.

* The chart shows $1 invested in shares since 1900 would have compounded to $395,550 today compared with $727 if that $1 had been invested in **bonds**.

* Over all rolling 40-year periods, shares trump **bonds** and cash for returns, so take a long term approach to investing.Source: Shane Oliver, chief economist, AMP Capital

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