RRRCC

REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE COMMUNICATIONS COALITION

Better Comms for the Bush

Since its inception in 2016, the RRRCC has made considerable progress in raising the profile of the communications needs of regional, rural and remote Australians, and has been highly effective in promoting the issue of communications in the bush. Through these efforts, regional communities have benefited from higher data allowances and improved business services over nbn Sky Muster, funding for mobile and regional network expansion, and a program to help regional Australians get connected and stay connected.

#betterbushcomms

The events of recent years reinforce what regional communities already know – telecommunications services are essential. While much has been achieved, there is still more to do to ensure equitable connectivity for regional, rural and remote consumers. The RRRCC has revised its priorities for action and will continue to advocate for #betterbushcomms.

RRRCC Members

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
accan.org.au

Australian Forest Products Association
ausfpa.com.au

AgForce Queensland
agforceqld.org.au

Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia
birrraus.com

Cotton Australia
cottonaustralia.com.au

Country Women's Association of NSW
cwaofnsw.org.au

South Australian Country Women's Association
sacwa.org.au

First Nations Media Australia
firstnationsmedia.org.au

Grain Growers
graingrowers.com.au

Isolated Children's Parents' Association
icpa.com.au

National Farmers' Federation
nff.org.au

National Rural Health Alliance
ruralhealth.org.au

National Rural Women's Coalition
nrwc.com.au

NSW Farmers
nswfarmers.org.au

Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association
ntca.org.au

Pastoralists' Association of West Darling
pawd.org.au

QLD Farmers' Federation
qff.org.au

Royal Flying Doctor Service QLD
flyingdoctor.org.au/qld

Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc.
rga.org.au

Victorian Farmers Federation
vff.org.au

WA Farmers
wafarmers.org.au

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Contacts

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Goals and Asks

The Regional, Rural, and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) incorporates 21 like-minded organisations dedicated to improving connectivity in the bush. The Coalition achieves this through awareness raising campaigns and direct advocacy. By working together, we effectively amplify the voices of communities across regional, rural, and remote Australia.

GOAL 1

A national regional, rural, and remote strategic framework and plan for future development and investment in regional communications

Coordination between Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments is important. However, at times this coordination has been limited, which has impeded investments that would ensure regional, rural, and remote communities and consumers have access to quality, reliable, and affordable communication options. To meet the evolving needs of regional, rural, and remote consumers, there needs to be coordinated investment in the maintenance, upgrades, and delivery methods of voice and data services.

Asks

- The Australian Government commit to the development of a formal regional, rural, and remote **investment and planning connectivity strategy**, developed in consultation with stakeholders, outlining clear priorities for future place-based investment incorporating social, cultural, economic, and geographical needs of each community.

- The Australian Government commit to establishing a **Regional, Rural, and Remote Communications Fund** to resource long-term and ongoing investment in regional telecommunications through the Mobile Black Spot Program, Regional Connectivity Program and State/Territory co-investment programs.

- The Australian Government undertake an audit of connectivity infrastructure and fund the development of a **mapping tool analysing existing connectivity infrastructure** to help identify gaps and strategically target investment to areas where it is most needed.

- The Australian Government **commit to inviting regional, rural, and remote representative organisations** to all government working groups on communications matters to ensure consumer perspectives are considered when developing and implementing new programs and technologies.

GOAL 2

Affordable communications services for regional, rural, and remote Australia

We live in an increasingly digital world. Access to essential government, banking, health, education, and social services is increasingly reliant on connectivity. To provide equitable opportunities to the population who live in regional, rural, and remote Australia, access to affordable broadband and voice services is a necessity.

Asks

- The Australian Government initiates and funds a **concessional nbn broadband service and equipment supply** (such as wi-fi routers if required) to support low-income residents of regional, rural, and remote areas.

- The Australian Government initiates and funds **un-metering of essential publicly funded online services** (e.g. Medicare and Centrelink) across all limited data connectivity technologies/plans (fixed and mobile broadband), to support regional, rural, and remote communities.

GOAL 3

Guaranteed access to equitable voice and data services that meet minimum service standards

Guaranteed access to equitable data and voice services is essential, irrespective of location. These services must be fit-for-purpose as technology-use needs evolve. Accessibility includes not only infrastructure but the ability to get connected and stay connected. To reflect the needs of consumers and businesses, the Australian Government should update telecommunication service guarantees to ensure acceptable service performance maintenance and adequate resolutions for nbn connection issues.

Asks

- The Australian Government commits to a **legislated minimum voice communication standard and upgrades to ageing infrastructure** through a reformed Universal Service Obligation, ensuring any alternative voice technologies are proven to have greater reliability and performance quality for regional, rural, and remote consumers than the technology they replace.

- The Australian Government legislates **new and improved minimum service guarantees**, including the introduction of adequate performance quality metrics for all services. These should be monitored against independent benchmarks for each service type for connection, fault repair and appointment keeping time frames for nbn Co. and other Statutory Infrastructure Providers.

- The Australian Government **investigates the use of escalating fines for failure to meet the standards** for each service type, with customers adequately and automatically compensated when baseline timeframes are exceeded.

- The Australian Government continues to **fund the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's (ACCC) Measuring Broadband Australia** program beyond June 2025 and to include all nbn technologies.

GOAL 5

Funding and implementation of Connectivity and Digital Literacy capacity building for regional, rural, and remote Australia

Connectivity and Digital Literacy are critical to the connectivity outcomes of regional, rural, and remote consumers and businesses. This requires funding for programs that foster the knowledge and skills to get and stay connected (Connectivity Literacy) and to utilise the connection (Digital Literacy). Regional, rural, and remote communities need support in accessing independent and dedicated technical support and information that facilitates their connectivity outcomes.

Asks

- The Australian Government **establishes a working group** including representatives from the RRRCC, telcos and local and state governments, to identify and prioritise investment in connectivity and digital capacity-building projects beyond the remit of the Regional Tech Hub project.

- The Australian Government **extends and increases funding of the Regional Tech Hub** to include remit beyond connectivity literacy needs of individuals but also to small business and industry, local government, schools, and medical facilities.

- The Australian Government and nbn Co. work with the RRRCC to **co-design communication strategies** and leverage existing community networks to promote the digital ability of regional, rural, and remote consumers.

- The Australian Government initiates and funds a place-based and community-driven **First Nations-led connectivity and digital education program.**

- The Australian Government **funds the provision of a digital tool** to represent connectivity options, provide information on available technology options and an easy-to-use guide of opportunities and obstacles to utilising these options.

- The Australian Government instructs the ACCC to **prioritise addressing misleading and deceptive information** in the telecommunications industry.

GOAL 4

Continued program to expand mobile coverage (both voice & data) and improvement in data speeds through increased capacity

Expansion of mobile voice and data coverage footprints remains critical. While previous government programs have resulted in further footprint coverage, there remains significant swathes of Australia with either no or limited voice coverage, and even larger areas experiencing data congestion which further limits utility. Degrading mobile broadband internet coverage and services due to congestion is a significant issue in regional, rural, and remote Australia. The switching off of 3G networks and increasing use of mobile data by users will likely exacerbate this issue.

Asks

- The Australian Government ensures Mobile Black Spot Program funded infrastructure continues to **promote capacity, coverage, and competition** by strongly encouraging shared network access.

- The Australian Government funds the **expansion of the independent audit** of mobile coverage outside the arterial routes used by Australia Post vehicles, specifically including analysis of coverage, capacity, and quality.