Better Comms for the Bush

Members of the Coalition are:

ACCAN	www.accan.org.au
AgForce Queensland	www.agforceqld.org.au
Australian Forest Products Association	www.ausfpa.com.au
Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia	www.birrraus.com
Broadband for the Bush Alliance	www.broadbandforthebush.com.au
Cotton Australia	www.cottonaustralia.com.au
Country Women's Association of Australia	www.cwaa.org.au
Country Women's Association of NSW	www.cwaofnsw.org.au
GrainGrowers	www.graingrowers.com.au
Isolated Children's Parents' Association	www.icpa.com.au
National Farmers' Federation	www.farmers.org.au
Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association	www.ntca.org.au
NSW Farmers	www.nswfarmers.org.au
The Pastoralists' Association of West Darling	www.pawd.org.au
Ricegrowers' Association of Australia	www.rga.org.au
Victorian Farmers Federation	www.vff.org.au
WAFarmers	www.wafarmers.org.au

Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition

#BetterBushComms #DataDrought

How to contact the Coalition

If you would like any further information or to contact any Coalition members please contact:

ACCAN
Teresa Corbin – CEO
02 9288 4000

National Farmers' Federation
Mark Harvey-Sutton – Manager, Rural Affairs
02 6269 5666

A unique alliance of seventeen volunteer-run organisations and advocacy bodies that are concerned about a lack of connectivity in the bush. The Coalition was formed to raise awareness of the important role of connectivity in regional Australia.

Our Goals

As a Coalition, we believe there are five fundamental approaches to be taken to support equitable connectivity for regional and remote consumers. These are:

1 A universal service obligation that is technologically neutral and provides access to both voice and data

Wherever Australians work and live, they should have guaranteed minimum access to data and voice services, which includes upload speeds and other features specified for existing and future residential, agriculture, health and education applications. Regional, rural and remote consumers and businesses need legislative rights to access broadband data and voice services. There should be no degradation in the current voice service that users receive. The service should be defined in a technology neutral manner and updatable to ensure that it meets consumer, business and productivity needs now and into the future. The delivery of voice services needs to be clearly articulated, with the Copper Continuity Obligation remaining until a suitable alternative arrangement is in place.

2 Customer service guarantees and reliability measures to underpin the provision of voice and data services, to deliver more accountability from providers and nbn

Updated telecommunication service guarantees and adequate performance is needed to reflect the needs of consumers and businesses. Ensuring safeguards are reformed so they are relevant to the needs of consumers is vital. Connection and repair timeframes, reliability, adequate performance levels and safeguards for vulnerable consumers need to be re-examined and updated. Services should be delivered equitably to all Australians. The Minister for Communications and the Arts should ensure that there are clear standards, benchmarks, accountability and clarity around wholesale (e.g. nbn) and retail provider responsibilities.

3 Long term public funding for open access mobile network expansion in rural and regional Australia

An ongoing minimum commitment to spend $60m each year on the Mobile Black Spot Program, or an equivalent program, which prioritises community identified areas and open access facilities. The program should have more flexible terms and conditions to address areas where co-investment is not achievable. Expansion of mobile coverage is critical in regional and rural areas. Current and previous programs have resulted in further coverage. However, there remain premises, vital community areas and high traffic areas that are at risk from having no mobile coverage.

4 Fair and equitable access to Sky Muster for those with a genuine need for the service, and access which reflects the residential, educational and business needs of rural and regional Australia

A committed roadmap of how Sky Muster capacity will evolve to allow for increased data is needed. Additional and alternative technologies are needed to ensure services continue to meet consumer and business needs. Consumers using Sky Muster satellite services are most likely to have no other reliable broadband communication options. Furthermore, for many of these consumers there are a number of additional needs, such as running multiple businesses from their premises, educating children, and housing a number of employees. It is vital therefore that the limited resource meets the needs of consumers. The sustainability of these services needs to be ensured into the future. Heavily utilised beam areas require the use of alternative technologies to ensure the capacity is not over used.

5 Fully resourced capacity building programs that build digital ability, and development of effective problem solving support for regional, rural and remote businesses and consumers

Minimum of $5m per annum funding is needed for a grants program for independent digital technical support and capacity building in rural and remote areas. All of society and the Australian economy stand to gain from the benefits of having regional, rural and remote areas connected - from productivity efficiencies in farming processes and the knock on increases in food quality and reduced prices, to reduced call on Government health and social welfare, to greater social cohesion and integrated communities. In order to realise these benefits consumers and businesses need technical digital support in the transition, and education on advanced technological processes that will deliver them. The minor cost in building the capacity now is minimal in terms of the longer term benefit that will be realised.

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