

## Government's commitment to bush communications welcomed

The announcement of \$220 million in funding for regional communications has been celebrated today by the Regional, Rural and Remote Communication Coalition (RRRCC) as a win for bush communications across the country.

The significant funding announcement from the Government accompanies their response to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review.

The Coalition is pleased to see that Minister for Regional Services, Senator Bridget McKenzie and the Government have recognised the essential nature of communications, and the necessity of improving access to telecommunications infrastructure, consumer protections and digital literacy for regional, rural and remote Australians.

An additional \$160 million for two new rounds of the Mobile Black Spot Program will be life-changing for the regional communities selected for funding, allowing them to access reliable communications on the go and in emergencies.

"Most of us now use mobile phones to keep in touch with family and friends whether we're at home or travelling," ACCAN Director of Policy, Una Lawrence said.

"It's heartening to see that the Government is supporting our regions to do the same with this welcome investment into new, reliable mobile infrastructure."

The \$60 million Regional Connectivity Program has the potential to further improve communications for those predominantly serviced by the Sky Muster satellite service. The RRRCC welcomes this funding and its intent to close the digital divide between country and urban communities.

National Farmers' Federation CEO Tony Mahar said in its submission to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review, the RRRCC called for investment in assisting regional consumers to improve their digital literacy.

"Particularly when it comes to satellite internet, the technology is complex, but having a better understanding of how it all works, can go a long way to improving consumers connectivity experience. The commitment to developing a tech hub to improve digital literacy will be valuable."

The Coalition also welcomed the Government's acknowledgement of issues raised during the Review's public consultation regarding satellite and fixed wireless performance and access, and is pleased to see that they are being addressed in this response.

The RRRCC has publicly called for the need to independently measure the speed performance of fixed-wireless and satellite NBN services to determine where the issues may lie.

While the RRRCC is pleased that the Government's response to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review, and acknowledges the need for consumer safeguards for regional and remote communities, the group is waiting for a

response to Part B of the Consumer Safeguards Review, and would like to see Part C of the Review released as a priority.