

Regional groups call for passage of Telecommunications Reform Package

Passage of the Telecommunications Reform Package is a key step towards guaranteeing country communities access to reliable communications, according to the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC).

Due before the Senate in March, the Telecommunications Reform Package aims to provide improved access to broadband services across the country with an emphasis on regional, rural and remote areas. This would be made possible through the introduction of two separate Bills – the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019.

The passage of these Bills will result in changes to carrier separation rules, provide new statutory infrastructure provider obligations on NBN Co, and will establish the Regional Broadband Scheme to support the partial cross-subsidisation of NBN satellite and fixed wireless services by other network providers.

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) CEO and RRRCC member Teresa Corbin said the elements contained in the legislation were fundamental to supporting access to telecommunications in regional, rural and remote areas.

“All Australians have the right to reliable communications, including those living in our regions,” Ms Corbin said.

“Implementing the Telecommunications Reform Package will ensure that the infrastructure needed to deliver these vital services can be sustainably funded.”

The legislation has been highly scrutinised since it was first introduced in 2017; the most recent Senate Environment and Communications Committee report recommended the Bills be passed with additional transparency measures.

The RRRCC supports this amendment and encourages Labor and the Crossbench to support the Bills’ passage.

“By taking action, we have the chance to help close the gap between city and country communications consumers,” Ms Corbin said.

The RRRCC’s priorities for action include five goals to ensure that regional areas have the same access to communications services as their metropolitan counterparts. One of these goals is to guarantee access to voice and data services, which this package will enable.

“Since the foundation of the Coalition we have been calling on the Government to prioritise the Telecommunications Reform Package, and for it to be passed with bipartisan support,” Ms Corbin said.

“With the ever-growing reliance we are putting on telecommunications and connectivity, we must ensure that regional areas are not left behind. Connectivity connects our communities to education services, adequate health care, development opportunities and most importantly, each other.”

**ACCAN
MEDIA
CONTACT**

*Melyssa Troy
Mobile: 0409 966 931
media@accan.org.au*

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.