

ACCAN Welcomes Infrastructure Australia's Roadmap For Improved Communications Sector

Released today, the **2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan** is a valuable roadmap for government, regulators, and the telecommunications industry for achieving communications services that are trusted, inclusive, obtainable, and available for all, according to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN).

The report by the nation's independent infrastructure advisor, Infrastructure Australia, outlines key recommendations to Australia's infrastructure sector that aim to drive economic growth, maintain and enhance the standard of living in Australia, and improve the resilience and sustainability of essential infrastructure.

"As the voice for communications consumers, ACCAN was very proud to partner with Infrastructure Australia on the development of the *Telecommunications and digital* chapter within the 2021 report," said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin.

The influential report outlines a number of key proposals, including the need to address issues of digital inclusion and the affordability of communications services. Infrastructure Australia's report states that being able to access, afford and use digital services is now essential for full participation in society, employment prospects and preserving mental health.

"We've been championing the idea that no Australian should be left offline simply because they can not afford an internet connection," said Ms Corbin. "The 2021 Australian Infrastructure Plan's call for a national digital inclusion strategy and a rolling national study on key affected groups is a much-welcomed response to reducing the digital divide in Australian society."

ACCAN has also applauded Infrastructure Australia's recommendation that telecommunications services be recognised as essential services.

"The natural disasters that severely impacted Australia in 2020, as well as the ongoing COVID-19 crisis have demonstrated that communications services play a vital role in the lives of everyday Australians," said Ms Corbin.

"We are very pleased to see that Infrastructure Australia has recommended that telecommunications be classified as an essential service and that further investment be made to improve the resilience and coverage in high-risk areas and along evacuation routes."

Ms Corbin added that ACCAN also supported the notion that NBN Co should continue to prioritise actions that deliver uniform minimum service levels to end customers.

ACCAN congratulates Infrastructure Australia for their thorough and extensive outline in the Master Plan which emphasises a consumer-centric pathway forward that major stakeholders in the telecommunications industry and all levels of government can use to build better communications services for all Australians. The communications consumer organisation looks forward working with these key stakeholders to bring Infrastructure Australia's vision to life over the next 15 years.