

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **#datadrought Coalition comes out in force in support of maintaining landline services**

The [Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition](#) is concerned reliable home phone services in the bush may be soon put at risk under proposed changes to the Universal Service Obligation (USO).

Members of the Coalition have today appeared at the Productivity Commission's inquiry into the USO in Sydney.

As part of the Inquiry, the Productivity Commission is examining the possibility of changing how voice services are delivered, so that the NBN network is primarily used to deliver voice services. This could affect rural and remote consumers who are using the nbn Sky Muster satellite and have little to no access to mobile services. Effectively this could mean future voice services for rural and remote Australians could be delivered via satellite.

"While we acknowledge the logic in transitioning to more modern infrastructure, this does not escape the fact that in rural and remote areas a majority of users would be serviced via satellite which does not provide the same reliability or performance to what is currently available," said [Australian Communications Consumer Action Network \(ACCAN\)](#) CEO, Teresa Corbin.

"As a Coalition we are adamant that a reformed USO must not result in a degradation of existing services."

[National Farmers Federation](#) (NFF) President, Fiona Simson, is also concerned about the development.

"A transition to voice-over-nbn infrastructure could mean many users currently receiving a voice service over copper line would have their service replaced by an inferior, unreliable satellite service," said Ms Simson.

"The Sky Muster satellite wasn't designed to deliver universal voice services. A more acceptable long term solution needs to be found before any transition occurs."

The most significant concern for the Coalition is safety during such a transition.

"In emergencies a reliable voice connection can be the difference between life and death," Ms Simson said.

"There are also issues around how remote businesses are expected to operate in a 21st century economy and meet their workplace health and safety obligations."

"This issue is of significant concern for the Coalition and for this reason Coalition members will be appearing at as many hearings as possible over the coming weeks."

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## Member organisations:



## Members of the Coalition are:

- [ACCAN](#)
- [National Farmers' Federation](#)
- [Broadband for the Bush Alliance](#)
- [NSW Farmers](#)
- [Cotton Australia](#)
- [Isolated Children's Parents' Association](#)
- [Country Women's Association of NSW](#)
- [Country Women's Association of Australia](#)
- [Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia](#)
- [AgForce Queensland](#)
- [GrainGrowers](#)
- [Northern Territory Cattlemen's Association](#)
- [Victorian Farmers Federation](#)
- [Ricegrowers' Association of Australia](#)
- [Australian Forest Products Association](#)
- [WA Farmers](#)