

**For immediate release 10 May, 2018**



**Budget's failure to fund Mobile Black Spots Program stalls #betterbushcomms**

The Rural Regional and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) is disappointed the Federal Government failed to commit to funding subsequent rounds of the Mobile Black Spot Program in this week’s Budget.

Improved mobile coverage is essential for Australia’s agriculture sector to become a $100 billion industry by 2030 and is critical for the health and economic well-being of regional communities.

“Mobile coverage is a major problem for a lot of our members.

"The Government’s failure to commit additional funding to the Mobile Black Spot Program is a let-down for regional communities,” Derek Schoen, NSW Farmers President said.

The RRRCC recognises that some mobile black spot towers, funded under previous rounds of the Program, are yet to be built, and urges the Government and industry partners to expedite the roll-out of this vital infrastructure.

"We are huge supporters of the Program. It is delivering for regional communities and businesses, and will continue to do so with current funding," Australian Communications Consumer Action Network CEO Teresa Corbin said.

"However, a lack of commitment to further funding will leave many areas without mobile phone coverage. It is fair to say we are disappointed.

"‘What is needed is a long term commitment from the Federal Government that this, or similar programs, will continue.

"We will be raising this as a priority in the upcoming Federal Regional Telecommunications Review, due to kick off in the coming months.”

The RRRCC welcomes the Government’s $260 million commitment to improve GPS and satellite imagery. This will assist farmers investing in technology to improve data gathering capabilities.

"However, without mobile coverage farmers will be unable to leverage the benefits," Ms Corbin said.

Further, the $2.4 billion investment in science and technology to improve agricultural output and innovation in production will greatly benefit the sector. Connectivity will be key to achieving the productivity gains on offer from new technologies.

"The importance of high quality voice and data access by the agricultural sector should not be underestimated as we strive to improve economic output, access international markets, and enhance productivity," Ms Corbin said.

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