
Submission

6 June 2024

NSW Telco Authority
NSW Government
Via email: digitalinclusionstrategy@customerservice.nsw.gov.au

Re: New South Wales digital inclusion strategy

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (**ACCAN**) thanks the New South Wales (**NSW**) Telco Authority for the opportunity to comment on the NSW Digital Inclusion Strategy (**the Strategy**).

ACCAN is the peak body that represents consumers on communications issues including telecommunications, broadband, and emerging new services. ACCAN provides a strong unified voice to industry and government as we work towards communications services that are trusted, inclusive and available for all.

As a national peak body with staff located in NSW, ACCAN supports the development of the Strategy. Digital inclusion aims to guarantee that everyone in Australia can access and afford digital technologies and communications services.¹ ACCAN recommends the NSW Telco Authority:

- Ensure everyone in NSW has access to affordable broadband services and devices.
- Consider the accessibility of appropriate communications services in regional, rural, and remote (**RRR**) and First Nations communities in NSW.
- Investigate the availability of communications services and devices for people with disability in NSW.

To support individuals, communities, and businesses access the internet, digital technologies, and online services, ACCAN recommends the NSW Telco authority develop strategic partnerships and initiatives that address digital ability, affordability, and access. These initiatives should include, but not be limited to, providing affordable voice and data subsidies for low-income and vulnerable consumers,² engaging with RRR communities to better understand their connectivity needs, and conducting research on digital inclusion initiatives in NSW. ACCAN considers collaboration across sectors (such as libraries, businesses, community centres, schools, and non-profits) as essential to ensuring digital inclusion becomes a reality for everyone in NSW.

New and advanced technology has the potential to enable everyone in our communities to easily use digital tools and be part of the online world. However, ACCAN recommends the NSW Telco

¹ Australian Digital Inclusion Index, 'What is digital inclusion', *Measuring Australia's digital divide* (Web Page) <<https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/>>.

² ACCAN, *No Australian Left Offline policy position*, (Web Page) <<https://accan.org.au/accans-work/no-australian-left-offline>>.

Authority first investigate the numerous technologies and platforms currently available to assist people in accessing online services, especially people with disabilities and older Australians.³

Finally, digital technology can have significant benefits for First Nations communities. ACCAN recommends the NSW Telco Authority take a place-based approach to understanding the digital inclusion barriers of different communities. We also recommend the NSW Telco Authority engage with the Australian Government's First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group,⁴ along with the Mapping the Digital Gap project,⁵ to better understand and support the digital inclusion needs of First Nations communities across NSW.

We thank the NSW Telco Authority for the opportunity to comment on the Strategy. Should you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission further, please do not hesitate to contact me at amelia.radke@accan.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Amelia Radke
Senior Policy Adviser

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication 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. ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia's past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. [Read our RAP.](#)

³ ACCAN, *Accessible Telecoms* (Web Page) <<https://www.accessibletelecoms.org.au/>>.

⁴ First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group, *First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group* (Web Page) <<https://www.digitalinclusion.gov.au/>>.

⁵ ADM+S, 'Mapping the digital gap', *Project summary* (Web Page) <<https://www.admscentre.org.au/mapping-the-digital-gap/>>.