

National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program (RRAMP) draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines

24 July 2026



**CENTRAL NSW
JOINT ORGANISATION**

Bathurst
Blayney
Cabonne
Cowra
Forbes
Lachlan
Lithgow
Oberon
Orange
Parkes
Weddin

The Central NSW JO speaks for over 182,000 people covering an area of more than 63,000sq kms comprising of Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, and Weddin

24 July 2026

Mobile Coverage Roads Team
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development,
Communications, Sport and the Arts

By email: MobileCoverageRoads@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Submission on the National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program (RRAMP) draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines

CNSWJO represents 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs)- Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes and Weddin- covering more than 63,000 square kilometres and a population of around 182,000 people. We work collaboratively to strengthen intergovernmental relationships, improve regional outcomes and elevate shared strategic priorities across Central NSW. Our CNSWJO Strategic Plan can be found [here](#).

The CNSWJO welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program (RRAMP).

Regional context

Our region is traversed by a number of nationally and regionally significant freight and tourism corridors, including the Great Western Highway, Mitchell Highway, Newell Highway, Mid-Western Highway, Lachlan Valley Way, Escort Way and Henry Lawson Way, which connect Sydney to regional NSW and onward to South Australia, Queensland and Victoria.

Reliable mobile coverage on our regional roads is a matter of basic safety as much as convenience. Long, sparsely populated stretches of highway in our region still experience patchy or no mobile coverage, leaving motorists unable to call for help in a crash or breakdown, and hamper coordination during the bushfires, floods and storms that regularly affect Central NSW.

The closure of the 3G network highlighted just how thin this coverage margin already is in many parts of our region. CNSWJO is currently developing a Regional Digital Plan in partnership with nbn Local, Telstra and Regional Development Australia Central West, to provide a coordinated, evidence-based approach to identifying broadband and mobile coverage gaps across our LGAs.

We would welcome the opportunity to align that work with RRAMP's Eligible Locations Database as it develops.

Comments on the draft Guidelines

The Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO) strongly supports the objectives of the Program and welcomes the significant investment it represents in closing multi-carrier mobile coverage gaps on regional highways and major roads.

We understand that grant funding under RRAMP is only available to Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and Mobile Network Infrastructure Providers (MNIPs), and that councils and joint organisations are not eligible applicants. Our comments below are therefore offered from the perspective of the region's local government sector, which will be asked to endorse projects, nominate priority roads, and work alongside successful applicants to deliver outcomes on the ground.

1. Local government endorsement (section 5.1.4)

The draft Guidelines require each project to have written endorsement from the relevant state or territory government and the relevant local government. For a region such as ours, spanning 11 LGAs, a project on a corridor such as the Mitchell Highway or Lachlan Valley Way may cross several council boundaries.

We ask the Department to consider a single regional endorsement from the Joint Organisation, on behalf of affected member councils, or to set out a streamlined process for obtaining endorsement across multiple LGAs. Without this, an applicant seeking endorsement from several individual councils along a single corridor could face unnecessary delay in reaching 'shovel-ready' status.

2. Nominating additional roads (section 5.2.2)

Under the draft Guidelines, additional roads can only be nominated by a state or territory government, or by a federal, state or territory parliamentarian with state or territory endorsement. Joint organisations and councils hold detailed local knowledge of crash history, freight movements, tourism patterns and community need that may not otherwise be visible to the Department or to applicant carriers.

We recommend the Guidelines be amended to allow joint organisations and councils to nominate additional roads directly, or at minimum to formally partner with the NSW Government to fast-track nominations it endorses on our behalf.

On this point, we would ask the Department to confirm whether corridors such as the Lachlan Valley Way, Escort Way, Henry Lawson Way and Mid-Western Highway are already captured as 'Trunk' or 'Primary' roads under the OpenStreetMap classification referenced in the Guidelines. These roads carry significant regional freight, agricultural and tourism traffic and, in our view, should be treated as Eligible Roads regardless of their OpenStreetMap classification.

3. Eligible Strategic Locations (section 5.2.3)

We support the range of Strategic Location types listed (rest areas and truck stops, campgrounds, service centres, EV charging stations, tourist sites and public toilets).

We recommend the Database, once published, be shared with joint organisations and councils for review, so that we can identify any Strategic Locations in our region that may be missing from the available data, consistent with the Guidelines' acknowledgement that the Database does not include all Eligible Strategic Locations.

4. Resilience and backup power (section 5.1.2)

We strongly support the requirement for auxiliary back-up power providing a minimum of 12 hours in the event of a loss of external power, 'where technically feasible'. Given the frequency and duration of power outages during bushfire, flood and storm events in our region, we ask the Department to require applicants to clearly justify any claim that back-up power is not technically feasible, rather than allowing this to be treated as a default exemption. For sites on identified primary evacuation routes or in areas of elevated bushfire risk, we would support a longer minimum backup period than 12 hours.

5. Funding tiers and remoteness classification (section 3.1)

We support the tiered funding model that rewards active multi-carrier sharing. However, we note that grant funding for new infrastructure in 'regional' areas (as opposed to 'remote' or 'very remote' areas, per the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Remoteness Structure) is capped at 75 per cent of Total Project Cost for two new carriers, compared with 85 or 100 per cent in remote areas.

Several of our member LGAs, for example, parts of Lachlan, Weddin and Forbes sit within the 'regional' classification under the ABS structure despite having commercial characteristics closer to remote areas, including low population density and thin commercial incentives for carrier investment.

We ask that consideration be given to whether the remoteness classification adequately reflects commercial viability at the LGA level, or whether some flexibility should be built into the funding tiers for regional council areas that can demonstrate similarly weak commercial investment cases to remote areas.

6. Ongoing visibility and engagement for local government

As councils and joint organisations are not eligible applicants but will be asked to provide endorsements and are best placed to identify community need, we ask that the Guidelines include a clear mechanism for the Department to keep local government informed of registered applicants, projects under assessment, and funded projects in our region, beyond the endorsement step itself.

We would welcome the opportunity to engage with the Department as our Regional Digital Plan is finalised, so that CNSWJO's priority corridors and locations can inform future rounds of the Program.

7. Timing of additional road nominations (section 7.4)

We note that requests to add an Eligible Road must be submitted three months before the application period closes. Given the application period is expected to run for 12 months, we ask the Department to consider a rolling or more frequent cut-off for road nominations, so that priority gaps identified later in the round, including through work such as our Regional Digital Plan, are not locked out of the Program.

Summary of recommendations

The Program represents an important investment in regional safety, connectivity, economic development and disaster resilience. In particular, CNSWJO supports:

- Expanded mobile coverage on key regional corridors, including major freight and tourism routes such as the Great Western, Mitchell, Newell and Mid-Western Highways, Lachlan Valley Way, Escort Way and Henry Lawson Way.
- The Eligible Strategic Locations approach, including coverage improvements at rest areas, truck stops, campgrounds, tourist destinations, EV charging stations, service centres and public amenities.

- The requirement for backup power at mobile sites, recognising the importance of telecommunications resilience during bushfires, floods and storms.
- The tiered funding model that encourages active multi-carrier infrastructure sharing, helping maximise public value and coverage outcomes.

While supporting the program, CNSWJO recommends several improvements to ensure regional communities and local governments can contribute effectively:

1. Streamline council endorsement requirements by allowing a single Joint Organisation endorsement or establishing a simplified process for projects spanning multiple LGAs.
2. Enable councils and Joint Organisations to nominate additional roads directly or partner formally with the NSW Government to fast-track endorsed nominations.
3. Provide the Strategic Locations Database to councils and Joint Organisations for review to identify any missing eligible locations and improve regional data accuracy.
4. Review the remoteness-based funding framework to ensure funding eligibility reflects commercial viability in regional council areas, not solely remoteness classifications.
5. Establish a clear process for ongoing local government engagement, including regular updates on registered applicants, projects under assessment, and funded projects within each region.
6. Introduce rolling or more frequent road nomination opportunities to ensure emerging regional priorities and newly identified coverage gaps can be considered throughout the program.

The CNSWJO strongly supports the intent of RRAMP and the opportunity it presents to strengthen mobile connectivity across regional Australia. The Program has the potential to deliver significant benefits for road safety, emergency response, freight productivity, tourism and community resilience. We encourage the Department to continue working closely with local government and regional stakeholders to ensure investment is directed to the areas of greatest need and informed by local knowledge. CNSWJO would welcome ongoing engagement as our Regional Digital Plan is finalised, including opportunities to align regional priorities with future rounds of the Program and the development of the Eligible Locations Database.

If you require further information or clarification on comments in this submission, please contact me on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,



Kate Barker
Executive Officer
Central NSW Joint Organisation (CNSWJO)