

24 July 2026

National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program
Draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines

To Whom it May Concern,

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

On behalf of Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3), I am pleased to provide this submission in response to the draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines for the National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program (RRAMP). GW3 supports the intent of RRAMP and its focus on improving multi-carrier mobile coverage on regional roads. Reliable mobile connectivity is critical to safety, productivity and regional economic development, particularly in regions where road corridors support freight, agriculture, tourism, emergency response and mobile workforces.

As the regional economic development organisation representing the Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday local government areas, GW3 leads coordinated digital infrastructure advocacy through the Greater Whitsunday Digital Leaders Group. This submission draws on evidence from the Connect Greater Whitsunday Project Roadmap, including industry engagement, infrastructure analysis and independent drive testing of mobile coverage.

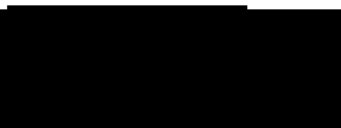
That evidence shows connectivity challenges are often experienced across road corridors rather than at isolated locations. Mobile blackspots and inconsistent coverage affect the movement of people, goods and services across the region and constrain safety, freight efficiency, agricultural innovation, tourism confidence and emergency response capability.

GW3 recommends one practical refinement to the draft guidelines: recognise corridor-based connectivity projects as eligible, alongside fixed strategic locations, to encourage investments that deliver continuous or meaningful coverage across regional road corridors.

GW3 welcomes ongoing engagement with the Australian Government and would be pleased to provide further information to support program design and implementation.

Kind Regards,

GREATER WHITSUNDAY ALLIANCE



Karla Steen

Interim Chief Executive Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3) supports the Australian Government's commitment to improving multi-carrier mobile coverage across regional roads through the National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program (RRAMP). With the right design settings, the program has strong potential to deliver significant benefits for productivity, safety and regional economic development.

To maximise these outcomes, the program should explicitly support connectivity across regional transport corridors, as well as at fixed strategic locations. Users of regional road networks need reliable connectivity throughout their journey, not only at isolated points along the route.

Key users of regional road connectivity in Greater Whitsunday include freight and heavy vehicle operators moving resources, agriculture and goods; agricultural producers and workers operating across large, distributed areas; tourists and visitors travelling through regional and remote destinations; emergency services and disaster response agencies; and regional residents and mobile workforces.

Evidence from the Connect Greater Whitsunday Project Roadmap shows that users experience mobile blackspots and inconsistent coverage across several key economic and transport corridors, including the Peak Downs Highway, Fitzroy Development Road, Marlborough-Sarina Road, Bowen Development Road and Mackay-Eungella Road. The draft RRAMP guidelines place strong emphasis on fixed Eligible Strategic Locations such as rest areas, campgrounds, service centres and tourist facilities. While these locations are important, a site-based approach may not fully address how connectivity is experienced across regional Australia, where economic activity, freight movements, tourism and emergency response often occur along entire transport corridors.

To better align investment with user needs and maximise economic and safety outcomes, GW3 recommends that RRAMP introduce eligibility for corridor-based connectivity projects that deliver continuous or meaningful coverage across road corridors, not only at individual locations.

SUBMISSION RESPONSE

Regional context: connectivity as economic infrastructure

Digital connectivity is now core to economic infrastructure, equivalent to roads, energy and water. In the Greater Whitsunday region, mobile connectivity directly enables freight and logistics efficiency across mining and agricultural supply chains; agricultural productivity, including smart farming and IoT applications; tourism growth, particularly in regional and nature-based destinations; workforce mobility and regional employment; and investment attraction, including renewable energy and industrial development.

The Connect Greater Whitsunday Project Roadmap identifies major connectivity gaps across key economic corridors, including Peak Downs Highway, Fitzroy Development Road, Marlborough-Sarina Road, Bowen Development Road and Mackay-Eungella Road. These corridors are critical to regional and national productivity, yet many experience persistent mobile blackspots and inconsistent coverage over long distances, constraining economic activity and growth.

Key issue: fixed location model may limit economic impact

The draft RRAMP guidelines prioritise investment at fixed strategic locations such as rest areas, tourist sites and service centres. While these locations have value, this model may not reflect how economic activity occurs in regional Australia. Freight does not stop at rest areas; it moves along entire corridors. Agricultural and mining operations span large geographic areas. Tourism depends on access to and travel through regions, not only destinations. Regional workforces operate across distributed sites, not fixed nodes.

As a result, the current design risks delivering connectivity at isolated points while leaving large gaps between those points, limiting the program's ability to improve end-to-end safety, productivity and regional economic performance.

Why corridor-based investment delivers greater economic value

The Roadmap demonstrates that the highest-value projects are corridor-based, where benefits accrue across entire supply chains and regional systems. Corridor-level connectivity delivers end-to-end freight visibility and efficiency, improved reliability for agricultural production and logistics, enhanced tourism routes and regional dispersal, stronger regional labour mobility and service access, and increased resilience of economic systems during disruptions.

Importantly, corridor-based solutions align with how telecommunications networks are designed in practice, requiring multiple coordinated sites and supporting infrastructure to deliver meaningful coverage.

RECOMMENDATION

Introduce corridor-based eligibility

The program should explicitly recognise corridor-based connectivity outcomes alongside fixed strategic locations, allowing projects to be assessed on their ability to improve coverage across meaningful sections of regional road networks. The current focus on fixed locations may result in isolated improvements, while users continue to experience connectivity gaps between sites. A corridor-based approach better reflects how regional roads are used and supports stronger economic and safety outcomes without requiring prescriptive or data-heavy eligibility criteria.

CONCLUSION

GW3 supports the objectives of the National Regional Roads Australia Mobile Program and its focus on improving mobile connectivity across regional Australia. However, users of regional road networks experience connectivity across entire journeys, not only at individual locations. Recognising corridor-based connectivity projects as eligible would better align the program with how regional transport networks are used and help maximise safety, productivity and regional development outcomes.

Thank you for considering our submission. GW3 would welcome the opportunity to provide further information or discuss the Greater Whitsunday region's evidence base and corridor-based connectivity priorities.