

28 October 2021



Department of Infrastructure, Transport,  
Regional Development and Communications  
GPO Box 594,  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

By email: regionalconnectivity@communications.gov.au

### **Re Regional Connectivity Program Round 2 Grant Opportunity Draft Guidelines**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the request for feedback on the Regional Connectivity Program Round 2 Grant Opportunity Draft Guidelines.

The Kimberley Regional Group (KRG) is an alliance of the four Shires of the Kimberley, being the Shire of Broome, the Shire of Derby West Kimberley, the Shire of Halls Creek and the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley. Collaboratively the group seeks to support outcomes for the region through improved social, economic and cultural outcomes.

Digital connectivity remains of vital importance to regional and remote communities and is critical infrastructure to ensure that businesses, education and family opportunities achieve parity with those available in metropolitan regions. To provide this feedback, we reviewed digital matters identified by the KRG and assessed them against the guidelines, noting that some of the items are not the target of this grant funding. Key issues include:

- Proximity to NBN fibre cable but no reticulation.
- Emergency Management
- Proprietary digital infrastructure requiring more than one mobile phone account.
- Digital reliability including seasonal digital load.

#### *Proximity to NBN fibre but no reticulation.*

The requirement to be "outside the NBN fixed line footprint" needs clarification. There is a key issue that the NBN runs past towns such as Halls Creek & Fitzroy Crossing which have some of the lowest socio-economic outcomes and very poor school attendance. In the Shire of Halls Creek there has been negotiations with NBN and third parties to plan a solution to reticulate the fibre that would not have been undertaken otherwise. Grant funding can be part of the solution in some of these remote locations. Another example is the East Kimberley Regional Airport which has fibre optic cable running past however cannot access NBN as the airport is just outside the town boundary.

The need to avoid infrastructure duplication is recognised but a clearer understanding of the definition of the "footprint" will be required to avoid unintended consequences in the attraction and consideration of applications. It would be useful to add the definition of the NBN fixed line footprint to the Glossary to clarify whether this is the existing NBN footprint, locations where there is an NBN fibre optic cable and/or locations where the NBN footprint is planned.

