



18 February 2022

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
GPO Box 594,
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Via email: usg@infrastructure.gov.au

Re: Review of sunseting payphone instruments

The Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) is an alliance of 22 advocacy bodies formed to advocate for better connectivity in regional Australia. The RRRCC welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications' Consultation paper: Review of sunseting payphone instruments.

The RRRCC supports the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network's (ACCAN) submission to the consultation paper. The RRRCC participated in ACCAN's consultation and believes that the feedback provided in their submission accurately reflects the views of the RRRCC and the regional, rural, and remote consumers the RRRCC represent.

The use of payphones has decreased over time, however, they remain important to people in highly vulnerable circumstances and in the most need of an accessible form of communication. Payphones can keep clients in touch with providers when they run out of credit, be a reliable phone service in times of natural disaster, and importantly be an option for people experiencing homelessness, family and domestic violence and other emergency situations to keep connected to safety. Payphones are used under these circumstances across the country, however, for those in areas of geographical isolation, payphones may be the only option available.

Regional, rural and remote Australia can at times experience communication outages caused by weather events and electricity outages and large areas outside of mobile coverage. For these consumers, payphones can be the only reliable method to make phone calls.

The RRRCC support the below points of the ACCAN submission and encourage the department to consider the 18 recommendations ACCAN provide:

- Decisions regarding payphone installation and removal should be based solely on community need as opposed to the commercial viability of providing the service.
- Installation and repair timeframes in regional and rural areas must reflect the heightened need for payphone services in these communities.
- Rules surrounding public consultation for payphone installation, relocation and removal need to be modernised in line with community engagement best practice.
- Increased oversight is needed regarding the assessments upon which payphone removals are based.

Yours sincerely

The Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition