

**1. What telecommunications services are required in regional Australia to meet current and future needs? Are there any things regional communities and businesses need to do, but can't, on their existing services?**

I need to work from home with a reliable connection, at speeds comparable to people living in regional centres, and with data downloads right-sized to my needs. As a Skymuster customer, I have extremely limited data capacity (without unreasonable and significant costs) and very poor download and upload speeds. It is impossible to work from home with my current connections.

In addition, I need mobile phone reception for voice calls which is available for my entire trip home, and at my home. Currently the phone reception at my home is patchy at best, and there are significant gaps in coverage for my commute. Noting that I don't live in a remote location, I live within 70 km of Wagga Wagga, a major regional hub. Reliable voice services are essential from a safety perspective.

**2. What changes in demand, barriers or challenges need to be addressed when it comes to telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Australia?**

Increased tele-commuting, and the state and federal governments' push for regional workforces, mean that the issues noted above will only increase in the future.

**3. How have the Government's policies and programs affected telecommunications service outcomes in regional, rural and remote Australia? How can these be improved?**

There appears a general focus on provision of services to major population centres. There is little apparent consideration of the mobility of the population, and the need to maintain connectivity to facilitate safety, mobile working, transport connectivity and innovation, etc.

Mobile services to 99.5% of the population but only 33% of the landmass is covered. This shows clearly that the government appears to be focussing only on populated areas; where the resident population is small there appears an absence of desire to augment services. This ignores the issue of mobility and the need to provide an integrated network of connectivity across the country.

A good example of this issue is the extended absence of mobile coverage on key transport corridors – for example, the Hume Highway.

**4. How do service reliability issues impact on regional communities and businesses? How do outages, including in natural disasters, impact on communities and businesses?**

Outages on satellite services are frequent and create a scenario where it is impossible to work from home.

5. How might such impacts be addressed to ensure greater reliability? How can the network resilience be addressed in regional areas?

Serious consideration is required to promote a more robust satellite offering which is not as constrained as current. Significant effort required to provide integration between the satellite and mobile network to bridge coverage gaps, as well as to provide a reliable, commercial option for satellite users comparable to fixed line NBN.

**6. How did the use of digital services change for regional consumers and businesses during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic? What insights for future service delivery does this provide?**

With many working from home, the already poor network connectivity on satellite became worse.

**7. What can be done to improve the access and affordability of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Indigenous communities?**

See comments above

**8. How can investment in telecommunications infrastructure work with other programs and policies to encourage economic development in regional Australia?**

Economic development in regional Australia is contingent upon appropriate telecommunication access. People will not move to regional areas if they can't effectively run their businesses due to the poor coverage. Suggest government consider investment in infrastructure alongside relocation of government departments into regional communities, as well as working with local government and transport operators to provide greater connectivity both physically and digitally.

9. What role could innovation, including new models, alternative investors or new ways of doing business, play to encourage investment in regional telecommunications infrastructure? What are the barriers?

**10. To what extent will new technologies enable significant change to the delivery of telecommunications services in regional Australia over the next 5-10 years? Are there any barriers to accessing these technologies?**

Serious consideration is required to Starlink as a subsidised satellite service in Australia for current SkyMuster customers. A better, more resilient and fit-for-purpose offering is essential and to achieve this, need to explore and leverage new technologies

**11. How can Government better support the rapid rollout of and investment in new telecommunications solutions in regional areas?**

Partnerships with industry and state government to leverage opportunities. For example, could Transport agencies assist with rollout by facilitating access to road corridors? Piggybacking telco rollouts on other major projects?

**12. How can different levels of Government, the telecommunications industry and regional communities better co-ordinate their efforts to improve telecommunications in regional Australia?**

**13. What changes to Government investment programs are required to ensure they continue to be effective in delivering improved telecommunications?**

Need clear outcomes and benefits to be defined upfront and measured throughout the program. It isn't helpful to suggest that "mobile services are available to 99.5% of the population", when only 33% of the land mass is serviced. Outcomes need to be clearly tied to the needs of the end user, and these needs include mobility which is certainly a big deficit in the current model.

**14. How can regional consumers be better supported to identify, choose and use the best connectivity options for their circumstances, as well as to understand and use their consumer rights?**

There are too many options available and the market is confusing to navigate. A plain English approach is required where consumers can identify the best services to obtain based on their need

**15. To what extent is public information on connectivity options, including predictive coverage data and speeds, sufficient to help regional customers make informed decisions? What other information is needed?**

Available information is not accessible for most consumers – too much jargon and difficult to navigate

***16. What other matters should the Committee consider in its review and why are they important***