

Our ref. BN20/20

Department of Communications and the Arts

usg@communications.gov.au

## **Comments on Design of Alternative Voice Service Trials – request for comments and expressions of interest**

Dear Executive Manager

I am pleased to provide comment to the Department of Communications and the Arts (DOCA), on behalf of the NSW Government Telecommunications Authority (NSW Telco Authority), on the *Design of Alternative Voice Service Trials – request for comments and expressions of interest*, released in December 2019.

The NSW Telco Authority responded to the DOCA Regional Connectivity Program discussion paper in 2019 and provided information about the state initiatives that support some of the same target areas as the program. Rather than respond to the individual questions provided in the *Design of Alternative Voice Service Trials* paper, the NSW Telco Authority offers broad comments on the paper and information regarding related NSW initiatives in regional areas.

The NSW Telco Authority is supportive of the proposed Alternative Voice Service Trials, however we are concerned at the lack of perspective provided regarding the targeted funding environment. The NSW Telco Authority believes it is important for federal funding discussions to include awareness of related broader investment and initiatives. This would necessarily include state government funding and initiatives, as well as local government and industry investment, aimed at supporting the same or similar target groups. This would better enable leverage of other resources and limit duplication, providing greater reassurance to the public that their tax dollars are maximised.

The NSW Telco Authority would expect that a criterion of federal funding should be to demonstrate awareness of other relevant initiatives and programs and how they can be effectively leveraged. Furthermore, the NSW Telco Authority suggests that DOCA should consult with other significant funding bodies, particularly state government agencies, supporting similar programs in targeted areas prior to any funding round. This will ensure the most effective use of government funding can provide the best value for targeted communities.

The NSW Telco Authority is constituted by, and functions under, the *Government Telecommunications Act 2018* (NSW) to operate and maintain mission-critical operational communications services for public safety and government agencies within New South Wales.

The NSW Telco Authority has a key role in NSW regional areas, offering the 'Connecting Country Communities' fund (Fund), which supports both the NSW Mobile Black Spot Program and the Regional Digital Connectivity Program. The Fund seeks to invest in communications infrastructure and deliver improved regional voice and data connectivity with the objective of enabling regional economic growth.

Specifically relating to DOCA's Alternative Voice Service Trials, the NSW Telco Authority has engaged a third party to undertake proof of concept trials in rural and remote NSW, improving

connectivity in regional towns. While delivering improved broadband internet capacity, voice service tests will be undertaken to determine the quality of voice services achievable.

The NSW Telco Authority is willing to share any data captured from the trials to support the federally funded Alternative Voice Service Trials, and subsequently contracted data and voice services. We would also like to participate in the stakeholder reference group referred to at question 5. Please contact Alan McNamara (details below) to discuss our participation.

Should you wish to discuss this submission, or would like more information about some of our initiatives, please contact Alan McNamara, Director Planning and Projects, NSW Telco Authority on 02 9219 3104 or email at [alan.mcnamara@customerservice.nsw.gov.au](mailto:alan.mcnamara@customerservice.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

Kylie De Courteney  
Managing Director  
**NSW Telco Authority**