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To Whom it May Concern,

I write to make a submission on behalf of Regional Development Australia Central West and the Central NSW Joint Organisation in response to the Digital Technology Hub Consultation Paper.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Central West in conjunction with the Central NSW Joint Organisation have a fantastic shared passion for driving better regional communication outcomes across the Central West of NSW.

A diverse region with many towns, villages and regional cities, the telecommunications needs and challenges for our people and our local businesses are complex and varied. One of the biggest barriers to future growth is the continued lack of reliable telecommunications in many areas.

We congratulate the Federal Government on their continued work to develop an online hub to provide independent factual information. We acknowledge that the telecommunications market and relied upon technologies are changing at pace, and this discussion paper is well timed.

Any digital technology hub needs to be accessible to those in need, easy to use and responsive to their needs. Especially those who live, work and invest in the Central West of NSW.

Orange is a vibrant regional community and RDA Central West would welcome the Digital Technology Hub and the resources associated with this entity being established in Orange or the broader Central West. We have an amenity, lifestyle and opportunities that would rival any region of Australia.

Question One:

The provision of information around the types of coverage, plans, and technology available is vital to any successful Digital Technology Hub. To be successful the site needs to become an easy to navigate collation of all of the abovementioned information. Consumers and businesses will only be driven to the site if it is a 'one stop shop' that meets their needs.

Question Two



Regional Development Australia have a fantastic network across each of the regions we represent. It is important that existing distribution networks are utilised to disseminate information. The promotion of government services is at the core of the RDA Charter which underpins our operations. We would be a fantastic partner organisation to support the roll out of the Digital Technology Hub.

Question Three

Facebook remains central social media platform to regional consumers, however depending on the target audience wanting to be attracted through this process will impact the social media channel recommended. Instagram has a growing footprint, and a strong use within the female cohort.

Question Four

A limited hour phone service is essential. Providing an avenue for technical questions to be answered by an Australian based staff member will be well received and add value to the process. The hours of operation depend again on expected target audience. An after-business hours service (18:00-22:00) with a weekend window is recommended.

Question Six

Small and medium businesses are the backbone of the Central West economy. Many businesses are flat out keeping their businesses competitive and profitable. This is why a Digital Technology Hub that provides business relevant information around new technology, service providers and business specific tools is an essential component of what is required. Again, ensuring all information is easily accessible and the platform is intuitive and easy to navigate is a must.

Question Seven

The Central NSW Joint Organisation believes that local digital planning is essential for the future prosperity of our region. Steps have already been taken in this process which include RDA Central West and the Central NSW Joint Organisation having an MOU between parties which outlines our joint objectives and priority areas of focus. This has allowed a targeted use of limited resources. An expansion of this approach in other regions of Australia may lead to greater collaboration and efficiencies.

Question Eight

During an emergency situation, connectivity to stay in touch with family and friends is vital. Many residents now use their mobile phones for their primary avenue for news and staying connected to emergency services information and updates. Informing the public about what happens to connectivity during a bushfire emergency will be an important role of this Digital Technology Hub, where emergency response contact is happening in an ad hoc way across the region. If there are new technologies available that boost coverage during an emergency situation this needs to be made available through the platform. Alternatively, if there are connectivity challenges that arise during an emergency the platform also needs to make users aware that this is a genuine risk, and alternate steps need to be undertaken.

Building regional knowledge and sharing information through an emergency has been identified as a key strategy to manage the increasing likelihood of emergency events as a result of climate change in the Central West Orana Enabling Regional Adaptation Plan -

<https://climatechange.environment.nsw.gov.au/Adapting-to-climate-change/Regional-vulnerability-and-assessment/Central-West-Orana>

Question Nine

Ongoing government funding will ensure the longevity and sustainable delivery of the Digital Technology Hub. Service providers in each region could use the platform to advertise their services. A fee for service model will not be received well in regional communities as it is a new platform and it will take time to build the respect and currency of the offering in the minds of end users, before a potential fee for service model could be investigated.

General Comments

RDA Central West has engaged with the local business community and representatives of local government from across our region through our partners at the Central NSW Joint Organisation in the formulation of this submission.

RDA Central West appreciates the opportunity to make comment on this discussion paper, and welcomes the Federal Governments ongoing focus on improving regional connectivity.

RDA Central West reiterates our desire for our region to be seriously considered as a location for the physical staff and assets associated with the establishment of a Digital Technology Hub.

If you have any questions or require any additional information, please don't hesitate to contact me on (02) 6369 1600 or email director@rdacentralwest.org.au

Regards



21/02/20

Mr Sam Harma

CEO- RDA Central West

Cc: Mr Mark Coulton MP, Federal Member for Parkes, Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government