

13 March 2020

Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) Team

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
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Canberra ACT 2601

Email: regionalconnectivity@communications.gov.au

Dear RCP Team

Regional Connectivity Program – draft grant opportunity guidelines

I welcome the opportunity to comment on the latest consultation within the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP).

The complaints we receive from regional, rural and remote consumers reveal diverse needs and issues, including fewer communication options than consumers who live in more populated areas. I support initiatives that respond to some of the challenges these consumers face.

It is pleasing to see this grant opportunity extend to solutions that aim to address localised service issues. While my office deals with complaints on a case by case basis, we hear from some consumers living in regional, rural and remote areas who say the issues impacting their telecommunications services are also impacting others in their community.

In assessing grants, the evaluation committee might consider the following areas which would benefit consumers:

1. improving connectivity for remote indigenous communities via shared connection points that offer voice services, SMS and data access
2. offering mobile devices that can access both the standard mobile network and the satellite network for regional consumers on the fringe of standard mobile coverage, and
3. installing resilient cabling, such as fibre optic, in areas at risk of flood or bushfire.

I look forward to seeing the outcome of the Department's RCP initiatives.

Yours sincerely

Judi Jones

Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman