



9th September 2019

Australian Government
Department of Communication and the Arts
Regional Connectivity Program Consultation

Dear Review team

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

Regional Development Australia Yorke and Mid North (RDAYMN) is an incorporated organisation funded by Federal, State and local government. Our main goal is to promote and facilitate sustainable community and economic development within the regions of Yorke, Mid North and the Southern Flinders Ranges. During the past nine years RDAYMN has worked alongside a number of Councils, businesses, community and not-for-profit groups to increase economic activity and competitiveness and to enhance social and environmental outcomes for our region.

In order to achieve this RDAYMN work collectively through Regional Development South Australia to achieve these outcomes. The unique South Australian tri-partite model allow the South Australian networks an ability achieve the best outcomes for Regional South Australia and work. Spanning 11 offices with over 80 staff on the ground, the team are passionate, active and well connected with their finger on the pulse of each region's development needs. Led by skill-based boards, RDA work in collaboration with all levels of government, community and other agencies forming partnerships to support regional business and the investment ecosystem. Over the last 10 years alone the collective network has assisted over 12,641 businesses and facilitated investment to Regional South Australia in excess of \$2.94 billion. Collectively, we have powerful email databases reaching approximately 30,000 stakeholders every month, and a social media following of 51,000+ connecting us with local, national and global audiences daily (plus, we partner with marketing and PR experts to continue expanding these).

Collectively Regional Development South Australia has worked on projects including:

- Undertake leadership in RDSA Prioritization of Infrastructure Assets in 2013 and 2017 which was shared with all levels of government;
- Undertaking business cases for key projects;
- Publish best practice case studies from across Regional South Australia;
- Collate and provide to government a pipeline of investment opportunities (quarterly) which currently records a collective \$19.95B of investment projects and a potential 9412 FTE jobs.

RDAYMN's is itself working on a pipeline of major projects totalling \$4.93B with a potential to deliver 417 ongoing FTE's. We have a database of 4061 businesses a total social media following of 8194 Total social media following across all mediums we manage including tourism sites. It is also worth noting that the RDAYMN also works to annual Key Performance Indicators in at the end of the last strategic three year period we worked with 944 businesses and facilitated \$70.46M in investment to the Yorke and Mid North area.



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Local Government Partners

Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council | Barunga West Council
District Council of Mount Remarkable | Northern Areas
Council
District Council of Peterborough | Wakefield Regional
Council
Yorke Peninsula Council | Regional Council of Goyder
Copper Coast Council | Port Pirie Regional Council
District Council of Orroroo / Carrieton



In response to some of the key questions in the Regional Connectivity Discussion paper, we provide the following information:

Are there additional key elements that should be incorporated into the design of the Regional Connectivity Program?

Regional Development Australia (RDA) bodies have extensive on the ground knowledge of their regions including regional connectivity issues. Many RDA's have undertaken region wide consultation on connectivity issues in their respective regions. We would therefore like to recommend that a key element in the implementation of this program include that any funding applicant undertake consultation with their relevant RDA's in relation to areas / sites that they are applying for grant assistance [to improve connectivity].

A smaller funding round for specific place based initiatives as referred to in the discussion paper, ie, for "highly localised solutions for projects that, for example, are seeking funding of less than \$200,000" is also supported by RDAYMN.

Should other parties, for example local government authorities, business organisations or industry groups, be allowed to lead a bid for Regional Connectivity Program funding?

Yes, local government authorities, business organisations or industry groups tend to be acutely aware of connectivity issues that affect their local communities, businesses and organisations. Business organisations such as local Chambers of Commerce and or Trader Groups will be positioned well to identify connectivity issues in their areas and will be very aware of the impact that connectivity has on business operations and economic activities.

Are there other organisations beside local, state and territory governments that could be considered 'trusted sources of information' for the purposes of identifying local telecommunications priorities?

Yes – As described above, Chambers of Commerce, Business Trader groups and the like will often be well positioned to identify connectivity issues and impacts. Those that are incorporated could be considered as eligible organisations and or as a sector that should be consulted in any applicant's submission for funding.

Additionally and critically, Regional Development Australia bodies also have an on the ground in-depth knowledge of telecommunication challenges in their respective regions. Our own RDA (Regional Development Australia Yorke and Mid North) staff not only travel extensively throughout our region, therefore have first-hand experience of connectivity issues in the region, but additionally, RDAYMN have undertaken a regional mobile blackspot audit and regional connectivity consultation. Through these activities we identified over 100 mobile phone blackspots and a number of areas where internet services are either unavailable and or unreliable (reports on these can be provided if considered relevant).

For each of these areas we have identified and mapped these submissions to the Department- we have also as a group of South Australia Regional Development Australia organisations and prioritised directly to State Government to assist with their investment.

Are there ways that the Department can facilitate linkages between potential infrastructure providers and local communities?

Yes – potential linkage facilitation could be undertaken by Regional Development Authorities and or local government.



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What type of projects should be considered for funding through the Regional Connectivity Program?

Although referred to in the discussion paper already, we are very supportive of the programs outcomes including public benefits. A number of regions in Australia including in the Yorke and Mid North Region of South Australia have very isolated areas. Many isolated areas are used as tourist thoroughfare and or destinations, therefore the capacity to improve public safety in isolated areas would be of benefit. Further, some international tourists in particular find it disconcerting when they find they have no coverage – mobile or internet.

Is there a case for a third category, for highly localised solutions for projects that, for example, are seeking funding of less than \$200,000 (GST inclusive)?

Yes - A smaller funding round for specific place based initiatives as referred to in the discussion paper, ie, for “highly localised solutions for projects that, for example, are seeking funding of less than \$200,000”. There are communities where there are small pockets / micro-areas that experience connectivity blackspots, issues and impacts. The capacity to apply for ‘small’ projects and or multiple smaller projects would be of benefit to a number of localities. In this context it may also be worth considering having a sliding scale of co-contribution requirements, for example, if applying for a project / projects where the total amount is under \$200, 000, the co-contribution could be less, eg, 80% of total project cost. Depending upon what types of organisations are considered ‘eligible applicants’, a not-for-profit organisation for example may have limited access to a 50% contribution, though the project they are proposing meets most / all of the intended outcomes of the program.

We hope this information is useful in consideration to the implementation of the Regional Connectivity Program and we are happy for this to be a published submission.

Yours Sincerely



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