

# WE-ROC

## WHEATBELT EAST REGIONAL ORGANISATION OF COUNCILS

Incorporating the local governments of Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Westonia & Yilgarn

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Our Ref: 135-1 Economic Sustainability  
135-2 Communications

2018 Telecommunications Review Secretariat  
Department of Communications and the Arts  
GPO Box 2154  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

### 2018 Telecommunications Review – Submission from the Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils (WE-ROC)

I write in my capacity as the Executive Officer to the Wheatbelt East Regional Organisation of Councils (WE-ROC). WE-ROC's membership includes the Shires of Bruce Rock, Kellerberrin, Merredin, Westonia and Yilgarn. WE-ROC is a collaborative group of local governments in the central eastern part of the Western Australian Wheatbelt.

Operating by way of a Memorandum of Understanding, WE-ROC's objectives are:

- a) To endeavour to carry out the Regional Purposes in a manner which enhances and assists in the advancement of the Region;
- b) To form a strategic alliance for the retention of infrastructure, community services and population, increased funding for development and maintenance/improvement of local road network, economic development initiatives, promotion and marketing initiatives, retention of health services, salinity and environment and general local government industry issues;
- c) To encourage cooperation and resource sharing on a regional basis; and
- d) Not to detract from the relationships an individual shire holds within its community, with the state and federal governments and other entities it interacts with in the course of usual business.

WE-ROC appreciates the opportunity to make a submission to the review and hopes that its views will be informative as the Review Committee works to prepare its report for the Minister for Communications later this year.

WE-ROC's submission is complimentary to the individual submissions each Member Council has made to the Review Committee. Copies of all submission other than the Shire of Kellerberrin's form attachments to WE-ROC's submission (The Shire of Kellerberrin submitted an online submission).

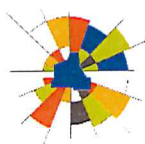
WE-ROC was extremely disappointed that its request for the Review Committee to conduct a face to face meeting in the Wheatbelt was declined. The dispersed nature of the Wheatbelt population (combined with low numbers of residents) and businesses along with an ageing population and elements of disadvantage means that the ability for these to voice their concerns is limited. The decision not to visit the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia is one that WE-ROC does not understand as much of the Wheatbelt will never have access to the NBN and for the Committee to have had the opportunity to discuss in person the barriers that inadequate access to new telecommunications technology would, in WE-ROC's view, have been invaluable.



Shire of Bruce Rock



Shire of Kellerberrin



Shire of Merredin



Shire of Westonia



Shire of Yilgarn

WE-ROC would also like to bring to the Review Committee's attention submissions prepared by RDA Wheatbelt in response to the Productivity Commission's Review of the Telecommunications Universal Service Obligations (USO).

Copies of RDA Wheatbelt Inc's two submissions to the Productivity Commission form attachments to this submission.

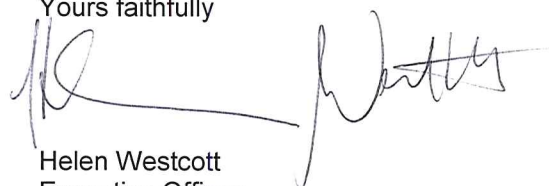
Whilst the submissions focus on changes RDA Wheatbelt Inc believes should be made to the Telecommunications USOs, the submissions document the considerable disadvantage and barriers residents and businesses across the Wheatbelt experience in accessing telecommunications technologies that are often taken for granted in Australia's capital cities and large regional centres.

Until these issues – data limitations, access to appropriate download speeds, cost of accessing technology and the reliability of available technology – are resolved it is problematic that the "digital divide" will be noticeably reduced. WE-ROC's residents and businesses (and those in the Wheatbelt generally) will continue to have limited access to the social and economic amenities available to the rest of the population in large regional centres and urban areas.

WE-ROC believes the Review Committee should have regard for the evidence presented in RDA Wheatbelt Inc's submission as it formulates its report for the Minister for Regional Communications.

As stated above, WE-ROC appreciates the opportunity to make a submission. It looks forward to the release of the Review Committee's final report later this year.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Westcott', is written over a horizontal line.

Helen Westcott  
Executive Officer

30 July 2018

Attachments