



**FIRST NATIONS  
DIGITAL INCLUSION  
ADVISORY GROUP**



Mr Andrew Symonds  
Director, Codes and Standards Section  
GPO Box 594  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Mr Symonds

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group. The Advisory Group was established by the Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP, in January 2023 to focus on Outcome 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Outcome 17 is about ensuring First Nations people are able to access information and services to make informed decisions about their own lives.

We have been asked to provide advice to the Minister for Communications on options to address barriers to digital inclusion, as part of the Australian Government's commitment to equal levels of digital inclusion for First Nations people by 2026. Our initial report to the Minister was published in October 2023 and is attached for your information. The report provides a comprehensive overview of existing barriers, solutions and the need for government and industry to work together to progress Target 17 to ensure that First Nations people have equal levels of digital inclusion. These solutions include additional funding, as well as policy and regulatory reform, led by the Australian Government. We understand that the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts is undertaking a scoping exercise for a Carriage Service Provider (CSP) registration or licensing scheme and has sought feedback on the feasibility of a scheme designed to:

- increase visibility of CSPs operating in the market
- facilitate a mechanism by which the Australian Communications Media Authority could stop CSPs operating in the market who pose unacceptable risk to consumers, or cause significant consumer harm.

In our initial report to Minister Rowland we clearly identified that there is a role for industry to play in progressing Target 17. We consider that a CSP registration or licensing scheme could support industry's full engagement with Target 17, by ensuring consumer protection, access, affordability and digital ability are central considerations in how CSPs operate. We note that such a scheme could also support to address historical issues with the treatment of First Nations people by the telecommunications sector.

A framework based on the Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) Community Broadcasting Licensing Scheme or the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code could be a potential option for the CSP registration or licensing scheme. We note the former requires the licensee to take the following issues into account:

- the nature of that community
- the existing and future needs of the community within the licence area
- the capacity of the applicant to provide the proposed service
- the requirement for sound corporate governance processes.

As with the Community Broadcasting Licensing Scheme, we consider it essential that all carriers and resellers be captured and that providers must agree to the terms of the licence in order to apply to



operate. We would further support the inclusion of increased consumer safeguards, including the ability for the overseeing agency to enforce penalties, cancel licences and ban directors of offending companies from reapplying for licences under new entities. It is also important that the licensing process provides a mechanism not just for registration but ensures ongoing compliance with the conditions of registration.

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss our submission in greater detail or to answer any questions you may have. Please reach out to our secretariat at [firstnationsdigitalinclusion@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto:firstnationsdigitalinclusion@infrastructure.gov.au) or contact the secretariat's director Natalie Peters Jones on (02) 6136 6921.

Kind regards

Dot West OAM

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