



Australian Government

**Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development, Communications and the Arts**

Regional Connectivity Ministers' Roundtable – Communiqué

24 April 2024

Regional Connectivity Ministers convened virtually to discuss the shared goals of improving telecommunications resilience and access for all Australians, regardless of where they live. The following Ministers attended:

- The Hon Michelle Rowland, MP (Commonwealth)
- The Hon Tara Moriarty, MLC (New South Wales)
- The Hon Selena Uibo, MLA (Northern Territory)
- The Hon Clare Scriven, MLA (South Australia)
- The Hon Gabrielle Williams, MP (Victoria)

Mr Andrew Barr, MLA (Australian Capital Territory), the Hon Jihad Dib, MP (New South Wales), the Hon Bart Mellish, MP (Queensland), the Hon Eric Abetz, MP (Tasmania) and the Hon Don Punch, MLA (Western Australia) were apologies for the meeting.

Ministers agreed their priorities include:

- improving telecommunications resilience measures and working more collaboratively across jurisdictions
- enhanced data sharing between jurisdictions, with a view to working with telecommunications providers and ensuring their data informs better decision making, and to complement the work being led by the Data and Digital Ministers' Meeting (DDMM)
- better targeting investment in regional connectivity to deliver improved connectivity outcomes for rural and regional Australians
- ensuring Australians can continue to access emergency services when 3G is no longer in operation
- promoting telecommunications infrastructure sharing to deliver the greatest benefit to the community.

Telecommunications Resilience

Ministers reiterated their commitment to improving telecommunications resilience, which will ensure public safety at times of crisis. The Commonwealth committed to exploring options for a more co-ordinated approach, and committed to continue working with jurisdictions to develop proposals that will improve telecommunications resilience.

Enhancing Regional Communications Data Sharing

In support of the work being undertaken by the DDMM, Ministers agreed to undertake future work with telecommunications providers to improve the sharing of regional connectivity data holdings, which will inform better decision making across all jurisdictions.

Investing in Regional Connectivity

Ministers discussed options for better targeting Commonwealth investment in regional connectivity to ensure the greatest possible benefit to rural and regional Australians, including cross-border communities. The Commonwealth committed to working with states and territories in designing the next round of the Regional Connectivity Program in a mutually agreeable way, which delivers improved outcomes.

Telecommunications Infrastructure Sharing

Ministers agreed as telecommunications infrastructure in regional and remote areas is increasingly publicly funded, infrastructure should be shared for it to provide the greatest public benefit. Ministers agreed to work collaboratively to incentivise active sharing of telecommunications infrastructure and share new approaches which deliver these outcomes.

Spectrum Access for State Government Services

The Hon Minister Williams, MP tabled a paper outlining the requirements of state governments in accessing spectrum for the delivery of essential state and territory government services, such as transport, public safety and emergency management. Ministers agreed to establish a working group which will develop a report, for Ministers' consideration, on future state and territory government spectrum requirements and options to improve spectrum policy.

National Connectivity Strategy

Senior Officials representing the Hon Minister Mellish, MP tabled a paper outlining the need for and scope of a national connectivity strategy to be developed. The Commonwealth is currently undertaking long-term policy analysis with the view of informing future strategy, and committed to engaging states and territories on this. The Commonwealth will work with officials in all jurisdictions to commence work on a national approach and provide an update at the next Ministerial Roundtable scheduled toward the end of 2024.