



28th February 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

**Re: Submission to the USO Reform Consultation**

On behalf of the Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (RCCIWA), we welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department's Discussion Paper on the better delivery of universal services.

RCCIWA is a not-for-profit member-driven organization made up of individual regional Chambers, Business Networks and Business Associations in Western Australia. With 46 regional Chambers, Business Networks and Business Associations as members representing over 10,000 member businesses, RCCIWA ensures that business communities in regional WA are connected to each other and are being heard by those who make the decisions.

Our role is to promote, develop and support all regional Chambers, Business Networks and Business Associations, provide a voice for business in regional WA and act as a conduit for information and advocacy. We recognize that telecommunications provide vital support and is the lifeblood for our regional communities. It is an imperative that reliable telephone, payphone and broadband connectivity is accessible, available, affordable and reliable, particularly for people living and working in regional and remote Australia. Reliable access to telecommunications and broadband has been (for a long as we can remember) and still is, the number one issues for all regional business communities in WA.

Our members are pivotal in the provision and delivery of products and services across WA. We need to recognize how much technology has evolved in recent years and that this is wide reaching. Our members are often at the forefront of cutting-edge developments that focus on the health and well-being of our communities, but also across the myriad of commercial and service-related industries that keep our regions alive and thriving.

We believe and support the fundamental principles of what a universal service provides. It is essential that future universal service obligations continue to effectively safeguard our community's access to fixed phone and broadband services. The USO should also continue to support the deployment and operation of payphones in regional and remote communities. They are an important part of the telecommunication services delivered to Australian people, including those living in vulnerable and isolated communities.

Reforming the way universal services are delivered will help ensure Australians in regional and remote locations benefit from the newest and most appropriate technologies available. We should use the best technology for the job and therefore we support modernization of the universal service obligation. Reforming the way universal services are delivered will help ensure Australians in regional and remote locations benefit from the newest and most appropriate technologies available. With all three tiers of Government strongly investing in online delivery for many services, implementing the best technology throughout Regional WA is even more critical. Without this, many regional communities will be left behind and unable to access key Government services.

We do understand that these reforms will involve moving away from legacy technologies such as copper lines. These technologies are no longer the best option to meet our needs and continuing to use them risks holding our members and communities back.

Since our inception in 1999, RCCIWA has built a strong and highly regarded network of regional business leaders, with the aim of ensuring that the voice of Regional Business in WA is heard. In line with this ethos, our members urge and support the review of the USO.

Yours Sincerely,

Kitty Prodonovich **Chief Executive Officer**