

Western Roads Federation is the peak industry body for the road transport and logistics industry in Western Australia.

In that capacity as a peak industry body, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the Department's Discussion Paper on the better delivery of universal services.

The Trucking Industry is the lifeblood for our communities both metro and regional and 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.

We believe and support the fundamental principles of what a universal service provides. It is mission critical that future universal service obligations continue to effectively safeguard our community's access to fixed phone and broadband services.

We need to recognize how much technology has evolved in recent years and within our industry this is at the forefront of cutting-edge developments that have focused on the health and well-being of our drivers, asset tracking and monitoring and reliable and accurate connectivity in vehicle.

Our industries role in the provision of delivery and products across WA is always at the forefront, particularly during natural disaster events when there are significant road closure impacts. Our teams are expected to somehow remain connected with the outside world, families and employers and provide updates on their locations and circumstances. How is all this possible without reliable and accessible telecommunications?

With these thoughts in mind, the future plans for connectivity in remote locations such as roadhouses, regional accommodation and along sections of highway's must consider and think about the importance of Government policy and regulation keeping pace with these requirements and changes. Mobile connectivity is paramount yet not always accessible and there needs to be a reliable network available to our drivers to simply ensure their health and safety is paramount.

Furthermore, as our submissions to previous inquiries relating to our industry our truck drivers are often first on scene at road accidents in remote and regional Australia. It is critical to be able to contact emergency services, quite frequently this is not the case.

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 modernisation of the universal service obligation.

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.

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