19 July 2024

Ms Dot West OAM
Dr Lyndon Ormond-Parker
Co-Chairs, First Nations Digital Advisory Group

Via email: firstnationsdigitalinclusion@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Co-Chairs,

RE: Discussion Paper: First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap

As the peak body for Queensland's 77 local governments, the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group (Advisory Group) on the *Discussion Paper: First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap,* released for consultation in May 2024.

The LGAQ has been advising, supporting, and representing local councils since 1896, enabling them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities. The LGAQ does this by connecting councils to people and places; supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions; and providing them with the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence.

The LGAQ supports the introduction of a Roadmap, that builds on the First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan, as extensive work is still required to achieve Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Creating pathways to improve access, affordability and digital ability is critically important to ensure First Nations peoples can access information and services to retain culture, participate fully in their community and make informed decisions about their lives.

In total, the LGAQ has made 11 recommendations in this submission, and calls for extensive community consultation as the roadmap continues to be developed. The submission includes a link to the LGAQ's March 2024 submission to the Better Delivery of Universal Services consultation and I can advise that the LGAQ will also be making a detailed submission to the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review that is currently underway, which will be provided to the Advisory Group in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Smith
Chief Executive Officer

First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap

Submission to the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group

July 2024

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About the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ)

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. It is a not-for-profit association established solely to serve councils and their needs. The LGAQ has been advising, supporting, and representing local councils since 1896, enabling them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities. The LGAQ does this by connecting councils to people and places; supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions; and providing them with the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence.

Partners in Government Agreement

The LGAQ on behalf of all 77 Queensland local governments is a signatory to a three-year partners-in-government-agreement with the State of Queensland.

The Agreement details the key principles underlying the relationship between the state and local governments and establishes the foundation for effective negotiation and engagement between both levels of government.

The Agreement acknowledges that local government is the closest level of government to the community, affecting the lives of everyday Queenslanders and acknowledging Local Government as a genuine partner in the Australian government system.

The intent of the Agreement was to continue the tradition of working in genuine partnership to improve the quality of life for all Queenslanders to enjoy. By identifying the roles and responsibilities of each party, it provides a solid foundation for effective negotiation and engagement between both levels of government.

The LGAQ is committed to working with the State Government and will continue to be a passionate advocate for councils, to serve our joint jurisdiction for the people of Queensland.

Rural and Remote Councils Compact

The Rural and Remote Councils Compact[1] signed on 25 June 2021, complements the existing Partnership in Partners-in-Government agreement in place between the LGAQ and the Queensland Government to provide a platform to ensure issues of priority for these communities are properly considered by the Government when developing policies, programs, and legislation.

The Rural and Remote Councils Compact, pledges to amplify the voice of and improve outcomes for the state's 45 rural and remote councils and their local communities by enhancing engagement between both levels of government.

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[1] Rural and Remote Councils Compact (2021)

Discussion Paper: First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap

1.0   Executive Summary

The LGAQ welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the First Nations Digital Advisory Group (the Advisory Group) on the Discussion Paper: First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap (the Roadmap), released for consultation in May 2024.

The LGAQ notes the development of the Roadmap follows previous consultation and release of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan (the Plan) in July 2023, and that the Roadmap aims to build on the Plan by providing a pathway for achieving Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap through to 2026 and beyond.

Overall, the introduction of a Roadmap presents an important opportunity for the Federal Government to support First Nations people's economic development, through:
- the continued use of earmarking program funds for applications that will benefit First Nations people and communities,
- the delivery of products and plans that are affordable and tailored to First Nations community needs, and
- the use of new funding programs to support the development of small businesses that will improve digital connectivity and digital literacy in First Nations communities.

In developing a Roadmap that aims to improve access, affordability and digital ability (literacy) in First Nations communities, there needs to be genuine and collaborative partnerships between all levels of government. Both State and Federal governments need to work with local governments to ensure that government investment in their communities will support the local economy, promote local skills acquisition and local employment, and serve to Close the Gap on the identified areas of disadvantage occurring in the communities.

Over 2023 and 2024, the Federal Government is undertaking several telecommunications related reviews including: the Better Delivery of Universal Services, the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review and the Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code Review 2024. The final reports for each of these reviews will all have significant findings and recommendations relevant to digital inclusion for First Nations communities and it is, therefore, critical that the outcomes of these reviews are considered in the Roadmap's development.

The LGAQ acknowledges that funding for telecommunications infrastructure in First Nations communities has increased over the last 12 months with dedicated funding in existing programs and recent Federal Government funding announcements, however this investment needs to be made in consultation with local government to ensure it is being directed to areas that need it the most. Likewise, the telecommunications industry needs to work with local communities to ensure appropriate products and plans are being offered, and that consumers are protected from contracts that create financial stress and may lead to adverse economic outcomes.

In preparing this submission, the LGAQ has collected views from First Nations local government representatives (Attachment 1) and drawn on the relevant LGAQ Policy Statement positions and LGAQ Annual Conference resolutions that bind the Association's ongoing advocacy.

1.1   Recommendations

In total, the LGAQ has made 11 recommendations for consideration of the Advisory Group in developing the Roadmap, outlined as follows:

- **Recommendation 1:** The LGAQ recommends the Advisory Group undertakes meaningful and direct on-country engagement with First Nations communities and councils, including with Queensland's 17 remote and discrete First Nations communities, in the development of a long-term digital inclusion Roadmap.

- **Recommendation 2:** The LGAQ recommends that 'collaboration' between all levels of government be recognised as a key principle of the Roadmap, to ensure a genuine partnership approach is taken when considering and implementing funding and other digital support measures in First Nations communities.

- **Recommendation 3:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government extends the universal service arrangements to include a customer service guarantee for mobile (calls and data) network services and connectivity, including a maximum outage permitted for mobile telephony.

- **Recommendation 4:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government ensures a modern universal service framework meets the digital inclusion needs of First Nations communities and delivers on the Closing the Gap target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have equal levels of digital inclusion by 2026.

- **Recommendation 5:** The LGAQ recommends the Advisory Group considers and incorporates the outcomes and recommendations from consultation on the Better Delivery of Universal Services and 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review, into the Roadmap's design.

- **Recommendation 6:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government should require telecommunications providers to consult with, and obtain the agreement of, relevant councils, both before submitting an application to Federal funding programs, and during implementation of the telecommunications solutions.

- **Recommendation 7:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government continues to earmark a minimum of 10 per cent of available funds in future rounds of the Regional Connectivity Program and Mobile Black Spot Program for projects that benefit First Nations people and communities and apply this requirement to all future telecommunications funding programs to support achieving Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

- **Recommendation 8:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government works with telecommunications providers to establish a framework for engaging First Nations communities, to ensure telecommunications products and services are affordable and designed for First Nations consumers.

- **Recommendation 9:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government, through the Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program, includes opportunities for First Nations communities to develop small businesses that will support digital connectivity and digital literacy in their communities.

- **Recommendation 10:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government ensures the recently announced First Nations Digital Support Hub and Network of Digital Mentors programs be designed in collaboration with First Nations communities, to ensure they are fit for purpose and delivered in a meaningful way.

- **Recommendation 11:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government establish an independent First Nations-led consumer protection advisory committee as a key action of the Roadmap, to provide advice to government on additional protection measures required for First Nations communities.

The LGAQ welcomes further engagement on the Roadmap as this work is progressed throughout 2024.

2.0　LGAQ Response to the Discussion Paper

In preparing this submission, the LGAQ has collected views from First Nations local government representatives (Attachment 1) and drawn on the relevant LGAQ Policy Statement positions (Attachment 2) and LGAQ Annual Conference resolutions (Attachment 3). This submission focusses on providing feedback on the proposed key principles for the Roadmap outlined in the Discussion Paper, as well as the three components of digital inclusion: access, affordability and digital ability.

2.1　Key principles for the Roadmap

The Discussion Paper outlines the key guiding principles of the Roadmap as including:

- The importance of place-based approaches
- Moving from closing the gap to innovation and excellence
- First Nations representation
- Adopting a technology-agnostic approach to long-term recommendations and solutions
- Centring First Nations consumer preference

To develop a Roadmap that utilises a place-based approach and centres First Nations consumer needs and preferences, genuine in-community consultation needs to take place as it is developed. This is particularly important in Queensland, Australia's most decentralised state where some First Nations communities in the Torres Strait Islands are located so far from the mainland, they currently utilise mobile networks from Papua New Guinea. This presents unique challenges to ensuring First Nations communities not only have access, but appropriate levels of consumer protection in place. Undertaking consultation in these locations will ensure the Roadmap is informed about the difficulties individual communities are experiencing in getting and staying connected.

As noted in the Discussion Paper, the latest Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) released in July 2023 shows a widening digital gap experienced by First Nations peoples, which widens even further with remoteness. The key principle of moving from Closing the Gap to innovation and excellence may therefore be premature and should be reviewed for inclusion in the Roadmap, after significant consultation has been undertaken with First Nations communities.

The LGAQ supports First Nations representation in key organisations across the telecommunications sector, government agencies and in key organisations, provided these roles are included in the decision-making and there is commitment from the organisation to allow appropriate time for consultation with First Nations communities.

In relation to the proposed guiding principle 4, adopting a technology-agnostic approach to solutions can provide immediate and effective results, as evidenced through the increasing use of Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite services in supporting connectivity across regional, rural and remote communities, including First Nations communities.

Case Study: Rapid Lower Earth Orbit Deployment Project

Low Earth Orbit Satellite (LEOSat) services are increasingly proving beneficial in supporting connectivity across regional, rural and remote communities, including Queensland's discrete First Nations communities. They are providing better options and alternatives to fixed standard telephone services and offer higher speeds and lower latency compared to geostationary satellites.

The Queensland Government Customer and Digital Group (QGCDG), part of the State Government Department of Transport and Main Roads, has been tasked with driving a more digitally enabled and responsive government, whilst facilitating simple and effective access to services for all Queenslanders.

The QGCDG undertook an analysis of digital connectivity and readiness of Queensland's First Nations and discrete communities that identified an immediate need to provide internet connectivity to high priority community locations as an interim solution while larger Commonwealth Government and telecommunications vendor programs deliver new digital infrastructure.

LEOSat connectivity was identified as the appropriate solution and the QGCDG has appointed the LGAQ as its agent to expedite a program to deploy this infrastructure as soon as possible. The program consists of grant funding of up to $45,000 per community. This funding is for the purchase, installation and ongoing costs for up to three years for satellite hardware and associated internet services, to connect a range of community locations to the world via LEOSats.

This program has been taken up by all 17 First Nations councils in Queensland and has provided connectivity within critical council infrastructure including Indigenous Knowledge Centres, youth and community centres and airports, waste management, as well as roaming devices to support ranger programs and emergency responses.

These services can provide better options and alternatives to fixed standard telephone services and offer higher speeds and lower latency compared to geostationary satellites. Feedback from First Nations councils has been highly positive, noting that the installation of this infrastructure and guaranteed funding for 3 years has had an immediate impact in improving council operations and connectivity, both from a stationary location and roaming perspective.

Centring First Nations consumer preferences is strongly supported as a key guiding principle however this will require genuine and meaningful consultation with First Nations people, communities and local governments.

It is understood that members of the Advisory Group visited some communities in Queensland The recent 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review consultation saw public consultations take place across regional Australia, including sessions held on both Mornington Island and Thursday Island in Queensland, however the LGAQ is not aware of any in-person public consultation sessions that have taken place as part of the consultation process for the development of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap.

Collaboration should also be a key principle of the Roadmap, as genuine and collaborative partnerships between the Federal and State governments and First Nations local governments

democratically elected by and representative of their communities will help improve First Nations communities economic and social wellbeing.

- **Recommendation 1:** The LGAQ recommends the Advisory Group undertakes meaningful and direct on-country engagement with First Nations communities and councils, including with Queensland's remote and discrete First Nations communities, in the development of a long term digital inclusion Roadmap.

- **Recommendation 2:** The LGAQ recommends that 'collaboration' between all levels of government be recognised as a key principle of the Roadmap, to ensure a genuine partnership approach is taken when considering and implementing funding and other digital support measures in First Nations communities.

2.2 Components of Digital Inclusion

As noted in the Discussion Paper, the three components of digital inclusion as defined in the Australian Digital Inclusion Index methodology are: access, affordability and digital ability (literacy). Each of these are critically important in the context of First Nations digital inclusion and should underpin the focus of the Roadmap as it is developed.

Access

As noted through feedback from First Nations councils, mobile phones are understood to be the primary means for accessing the internet in First Nations communities. Access to appropriate levels of mobile coverage and reliability of mobile services is therefore essential, especially in areas where fixed voice and data infrastructure is limited or not commercially viable. Some communities (such as Thursday Island) are serviced by multiple providers and towers, however the majority of First Nations communities rarely have more than one provider to provide alternatives and ensure competition exists.

The LGAQ is aware the Federal Government is undertaking several related telecommunications reviews and consultations throughout 2023 and 2024, including through the release of the Discussion Paper: Better Delivery of Universal Services for consultation in late 2023.

In March 2024, the LGAQ made a submission[2] to the Better Deliver of Universal Servies review and noted that the Universal Service Obligation (USO) does not include statutory obligations on telecommunication providers in relation mobile telephony. To ensure mobile customers are afforded the same protections, the LGAQ recommended that the Federal Government extend the universal service arrangements to include and commit to a customer service guarantee for mobile (calls and data) network services and connectivity, including a maximum outage permitted for mobile telephony.

The LGAQ also recommended that the Federal Government ensure a modern universal service framework meets the digital inclusion needs of First Nations communities and delivers on the Closing the Gap target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have equal levels of digital inclusion by 2026. These recommendations are relevant in the context of developing the First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap and have therefore also been carried forward into this submission.

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[2] LGAQ Submission (March 2024) – Discussion Paper: Better Delivery of Universal Services – available online here.

- **Recommendation 3:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government extends the universal service arrangements to include a customer service guarantee for mobile (calls and data) network services and connectivity, including a maximum outage permitted for mobile telephony.

- **Recommendation 4:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government ensures a modern universal service framework meets the digital inclusion needs of First Nations communities and delivers on the Closing the Gap target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have equal levels of digital inclusion by 2026.

In preparing this submission, feedback from First Nations councils indicates that there has been a significant uplift in ability to access the internet in some First Nations communities in the last 12 months, through programs with dedicated funding such as the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) round 3, and the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) round 7.

Under RCP 3, First Nations communities in Yarrabah, Torres Strait Islands, Palm Island, Mornington Island, Wujal Wujal, Horn Island and Hope Vale have received funding totalling $19.835 million to deliver fixed wireless broadband, community Wi-Fi and Mobile Voice and Data. While these dedicated pools of funding will result in many First Nations communities in Queensland having improved internet and mobile access, these programs don't require providers to undertake consultation with local councils during the application or implementation phases which can result in suboptimal outcomes.

For example, in feedback provided to the LGAQ one First Nations council has identified connectivity as an ongoing challenge. Despite millions of dollars of investment, and three new towers and different providers applying and installing infrastructure in their area, many areas of the community are still without reliable mobile connectivity.

The lack of consultation with local councils when providing new infrastructure can result in communities going without reasonable levels of digital connectivity, despite considerable government investment. Going forward, the LGAQ supports recommendation 1 of the Advisory Group's Initial Report that the Federal Government earmark funding in future rounds of the RCP and MBSP, with a target of at least 10 per cent of available funding for projects that benefits First Nations people and communities and recommends that the program be amended so that applications are required to be developed in consultation with First Nations councils.

- **Recommendation 5:** The LGAQ recommends the Advisory Group considers and incorporates the outcomes and recommendations from consultation on the Discussion Paper: Better Delivery of Universal Services and 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review, into the Roadmap's design.

- **Recommendation 6:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government should require telecommunications providers to consult with and obtain the agreement of relevant councils, both before submitting an application to Federal funding programs, and during implementation of the telecommunications solutions.

- **Recommendation 7:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government continues to earmark a minimum of 10 per cent of available funds in future rounds of the Regional Connectivity Program and Mobile Black Spot Program for projects that benefit First Nations people and communities and recommends that the program be amended so that applications are required to be developed in consultation with First Nations councils.

Affordability

Feedback from First Nations councils indicates that affordability is a critical issue in many communities, with the high cost of pre-paid data cited as a key barrier to people staying connected. Several councils noted that consumers frequently change mobile devices due to financial difficulties, with little to no on-ground support to be able to work through these issues as they occur. Further, while refurbished and donated devices support increased connectivity they are often shared between family or with other members of the community, creating issues in terms of privacy and the storing of personal information.

Telecommunications providers could be more proactive in designing and delivering products that are better suited to people in remote areas who use mobile phones as their primary or only device. It's understood that the QGCDG is working with some smaller providers through pilot programs in Queensland to deliver products at lower cost, with local trusted sources verifying identity in community, and plans that are at a reduced cost or with higher data limits provided. If deemed successful and commercially viable, these programs could serve as one way to address issues with access and affordability in remote communities.

As noted in the First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan, feedback received from councils indicates that First Nations people in remote communities have limited access to affordable and local technical support when problems are encountered. This presents an opportunity for Federal and State governments to fund programs to up-skill First Nations peoples to create businesses in their own communities to deliver critical technical support.

The Federal Government's recently announced Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program to create 3,000 jobs in remote Australia includes funding of $188.7 million for a Community Jobs and Business Fund. A discrete portion of this funding could be directed to First Nations communities to support the creation of small telecommunications support businesses, with the Roadmap outlining how this will lead to improved digital inclusion and economic outcomes.

- **Recommendation 8:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government works with telecommunications providers to establish a framework for engaging First Nations communities, to ensure telecommunications products and services are affordable and designed for First Nations consumers.

- **Recommendation 9:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government, through the Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program, includes opportunities for First Nations communities to develop small businesses that will support digital connectivity and digital literacy in their communities.

Digital Ability

The LGAQ welcomes the Federal Government's Budget 2024/25 announcement of $68 million in funding for First Nations Digital Inclusion measures that aims to increase digital ability through free community Wi-Fi, establish a digital support hub and a network of digital mentors, and improve the national collection of data on First Nations digital inclusion.

Feedback from First Nations councils indicates that one of the most important methods for improving digital ability in their community is through direct education, including how to get online and stay connected safely over time.

It is noted that the First Nations digital support hub is intended to be modelled on the Regional Tech Hub. This service appears to primarily rely on consumers reaching out to the Hub when they need assistance, however preliminary feedback received by the LGAQ from councils as part of the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review indicates little knowledge that this service exists. A more effective means for providing education and increasing digital ability would be for these initiatives to be driven by the communities themselves, with community members trained and employed to provide in-community support.

The recent announcement of free community Wi-Fi programs in co-design with community in Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw and Doomadgee is welcome, however as noted by the Advisory Group, there can be significant consumer protection issues if community members aren't able to access online resources privately.

As indicated in the ABC's report from November 2023, the Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN) uncovered 41 cases of Indigenous customers being sold products they could not afford after visiting a Telstra store[3], with six of these cases occurring in 2020 or later. Feedback from local councils indicate that these cases are still being uncovered by ICAN, and that the Telstra pink bus service rarely visit communities to provide support to affected consumers.

More consumer protection support and advice are required for both current First Nations consumers (to address existing issues), and for future consumers as participation grows, and digital connectivity increases throughout communities.

- **Recommendation 10:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government ensures the recently announced First Nations Digital Support Hub and Network of Digital Mentors programs are designed in collaboration with First Nations communities, to ensure they are fit for purpose and delivered in a meaningful way.

- **Recommendation 11:** The LGAQ recommends the Federal Government establishes an independent First Nations-led consumer protection advisory committee as a key action under the Roadmap to provide advice to government on additional protection measures required for First Nations communities.

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[3] Telstra's 'pink bus' service accused of not fully informing Indigenous customers of their rights - ABC News

Attachment 1: Feedback on the First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap Discussion Paper

Please note: The following general comments from First Nations councils have been received by the LGAQ in preparing this submission. It should be noted that the below does not necessarily reflect the views of all of Queensland First Nations councils or a whole of-council endorsed policy positions but does reflect the knowledge, expertise and insights of elected members and professional officers within Queensland councils.

How does your community access the internet?	
- First Nations communities typically access the internet using: - personal mobile phones - shared devices made available at Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs) and some schools - Internet services are typically accessed through: - Mobile phones using pre-paid data - Wireless connections using Starlink, SkyMesh, with some Telstra use though this was considered a slow service by many - Community wi-fi (where available)	

What stops your community from getting online easily?	
Access	- Mobile black spots are an issue in many communities, with some areas sharing mobile towers creating issues with network capacity - Telstra slow to respond when issues arise
Affordability	- Affordability is a critical issue in many communities, with the high cost of pre-paid data cited as a key barrier to people staying connected. - Some consumers frequently change mobile devices due to financial difficulties, with little to no on-ground support to be able to work through these issues as they occur. - Powercards often run out, limiting access to the internet where power is required - Some communities have only one provider available, no competition to help with pricing
Digital ability	- Older community members are often reluctant to transition to online services because of security and understanding, many do not have a way to safely store personal digital records - Some communities still rely on landlines rather than mobile phones, making the use of some online services very difficult (MyGov etc.)

What can government, companies and other organisations do to help your community get online to get the information and services you need?
- Telecommunications providers could be more proactive in designing and delivering products that are better suited to people in remote areas with a preference for mobile devices.   - Government should visit communities and talk to people on country to get an understanding of the issues they face.   - There needs to be better education on the use of devices and internet security and privacy, and better access to devices outside the IKC which are often at capacity.   - There needs to be dedicated training put in place to support the elderly.

How would better access to the internet and online services help your community?
- Support better connections with family and friends who no longer live in the community.   - Support retention and sharing of culture heritage and community knowledge.   - Support council operations to better serve the community and improve liveability.

The LGAQ Policy Statement[4] is a definitive statement of the collective voice of local government in Queensland. The key policy positions of local government that are relevant in the context of the Roadmap are as follows:

1.9 First Nations Local Governments

- 1.9.4 There should be genuine and collaborative partnerships between the Federal and State governments and First Nations local governments democratically elected by and representative of their communities to improve their economic and social wellbeing.
- 1.9.5 State and Federal governments will work with local governments to ensure that government investment in their communities will encourage the local economy, promote local skills acquisition and local employment, and serve to Close the Gap on the identified areas of disadvantage occurring in the communities.

6.1.7 Telecommunications

- 6.1.7.1 Local government acknowledges the fundamental role played by 'telecommunications' infrastructure as an enabler of economic development and in the provision of health, education and emergency services in rural and remote areas of Queensland.
- 6.1.7.2 Local government supports efficient planning assessment and installation of telecommunications infrastructure and is the appropriate sphere of government to determine the level of assessment to be applied to telecommunications facilities.
- 6.1.7.3 Local government supports co-location of telecommunications infrastructure and information sharing amongst the development industry, digital service providers, mobile network operators, telecommunications infrastructure providers and local government in order to minimise disruption to local communities and to maximise efficiencies.

8.4 Communication (8.4.1 Service Access)

- 8.4.1.1 Advances in technology should be applied to give remote areas access to telephone, television and internet services consistent with those available in urban areas.
- 8.4.1.2 Local government across Queensland experiences significant inequities in mobile phone coverage and reliability of services between rural and urban communities. Local government will engage the State and Federal governments to address this inequity.
- 8.4.1.3 Local government supports the concept of a system of uniform telephone charges throughout Australia to reduce the disparity of remote locations.

8.9 Regional Development

- 8.9.6 Digital infrastructure and technology are recognised as enablers to help overcome the barriers of remoteness, infrastructure shortfalls, attract regional investment and facilitate regional prosperity.
- 8.9.7 Local government supports the rollout of digital infrastructure, including but not limited to, the National Broadband Network and the provision of equitable access to high-speed broadband internet. This includes support from the Federal and State governments in developing the digital economy and online service delivery for local government.

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[4] LGAQ Policy Statement (2023) – available online here.

Attachment 3: Relevant LGAQ Annual Conference resolutions

The LGAQ is committed to member driven advocacy and working with members to build stronger local governments and more resilient local communities. In the context of the Roadmap's development, the following LGAQ Annual Conference resolutions passed by Queensland councils, are relevant:

Resolution 148 (2023) – Improving access and reliability of telecommunications infrastructure and services

The LGAQ calls on the State and Federal governments to ensure reliable access to telecommunications infrastructure/services and improved mobile coverage in urban, regional and rural areas, by:

- mandating all mobile phone carriers to properly address and resolve key mobile black spots within shorter timeframes;
- revising the funding approval process for the Mobile Black Spot Program to include a sign off from the local government area that the infrastructure proposed will be located in as part of the process;
- increasing funding for connectivity in regional areas, in particular narrowing black spot coverage areas;
- applying and ensuring telecommunication providers comply with a Community Service Obligation (CSO)/Universal Service Obligation (USO) when supplying publicly-funded communications infrastructure/services, whether partially or wholly funded.

Resolution 81 (2022) – Better engagement for Mobile Blackspot Program projects

The LGAQ calls on the State and Federal governments to:

1. To ensure there is meaningful engagement with the community – implement a notification or "tick off" process by the Federal MP and affected councils for the consultation aspect of any project application in development.
2. Include on the ground testing to ensure value for money in the location of this infrastructure which is designed to increase connectivity and reduce the digital divide.

Resolution 58 (2021) Telecommunications – Mobile Service Level Guarantee

That the LGAQ calls on the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) and telecommunications providers to commit to a customer service guarantee for mobile (calls and data) network services.