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The On Farm Connectivity Program Team
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
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Consultation – On Farm Connectivity Program

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the On Farm Connectivity Program.

Private Forests Tasmania (PFT) is an independent statutory authority established under the Tasmanian *Private Forests Act 1994*. We work to facilitate and expand the sustainable growth and development of the private forest resource in Tasmania. We do this through providing information to private forest growers, through research collaborations, advocacy, innovation and planning tools. Under our [Corporate Plan 2022-25](#) one of our four goals is to work with policy makers and regulators to improve regulatory efficiency and practical policy settings for private forestry.

Our submission provides responses to some of the consultation questions posed to primary producers in the Discussion Paper. PFT is not itself a primary producer but many of our private forest grower stakeholders are.

Q. What connectivity solutions do you believe are most needed on farms or in forestry or fishery businesses, and why?

Response:

1. Improved 4G and 5G mobile network coverage. Mobile coverage is fundamental to health and safety particularly when working in forests and on farms. These sometimes hazardous occupations, coupled with their relatively remote locations, mean that being able to contact emergency services without delay in the event of a workplace accident is very important and this requires extensive and reliable mobile coverage. The Australian Government's Mobile Black Spot Program has helped in recent years to fill some of the gaps, however Tasmanian production forests and farms particularly in the Fingal Valley, the Central Highlands and Derwent Valley near Maydena continue to have unreliable coverage.

Forestry and farming are also becoming increasingly reliant on smart technologies requiring enhanced connectivity. Some of our forestry stakeholders are now using the [Firehawk](#) wildfire detection system for early detection and response to wildfires. This relies on the 4G and 5G mobile network to relay digital images from a remote automated camera to operators in base station. The limitations of the mobile network constrain the further roll out of this technology and the timely notification of forest fires to fire crews and other emergency services.

PFT is currently developing our own TreeMapper app where farm foresters will be able to use a range of e-tools to better manage their farm forestry activities. Without adequate mobile coverage, the full functionality of these tools will not be possible leading to reduced outcomes for farm foresters.

2. Improved access to Firehawk wildfire detection system. As mentioned above the Firehawk system is being used in some Tasmanian production forests. The On Farm Connectivity Program could provide Tasmanian foresters financial assistance with the purchase and further roll out of Firehawk hardware (cameras, modems etc).

3. Improved access to LoRaWAN technology. It is not uncommon now to have forests and farms using networks of remote sensors providing and accessing real time digital data for a variety of contemporary management applications. The LoRaWAN technology (long range, low power, wide area networks) is ideal for connecting remote forest environments to the Internet of Things (IoT). Sensors currently deployed in Tasmania include soil moisture, temperature, wind speed and direction, humidity, rainfall, GPS trackers and even CO and CO₂ concentrations. The project applications include biodiversity monitoring, fire detection, workplace safety and weather monitoring. It would be valuable if the On Farm Connectivity Program could provide Tasmanian foresters and farmers financial assistance with the ongoing roll out of LoRaWAN enabled sensors and mobile and permanent gateways to further enhance the current network.
4. Improved access to LEO technology. Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite connections provide an alternative for remotely deployed sensors in forest and farm environments to be connected to the internet. The On Farm Connectivity Program could provide Tasmanian foresters and farmers financial assistance with the roll out of LEO enabled sensors.

Q. Do you have any comments or questions regarding the eligibility requirement options for primary producers?

Response:

Eligibility should be as broad as possible. PFT support the two options for eligibility provided under the first dot point on page 6 of the Discussion Paper as being an either/or.

If you have any queries on the points we have raised, please contact me on [REDACTED] or our Policy & Data Officer [REDACTED] on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Penny Wells
CEO Private Forests Tasmania