29 October 2021

Submission to *Regional Connectivity Program —Round 2 draft grant opportunity guidelines*

Dear Executive Manager,

I am happy to provide comment to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (the Department) on behalf of Agsensio Pty Ltd (Zetifi), on the Regional Connectivity Program —Round 2 draft grant opportunity guidelines, released in October 2021.

Zetifi is a wireless networking company and licensed telecommunications carrier that develops, manufactures, sells, and supports a range of wireless network devices for rural and remote areas.

Zetifi is highly supportive of the approach of the Regional Connectivity Program and the inclusion of the Connecting Northern Australia initiative within the application process.

We wish to provide two comments:

1) Prioritisation of project funding for novel solutions: Zetifi notes that the Regional Connectivity Program is tasked with contributing to the Department's Outcome: "Promote an innovative and competitive communications sector"

   To ensure the Program meets this Outcome, Zetifi believes the selection criteria should prioritise a percentage of project funding for novel solutions that deliver place placed connectivity solutions into locations where traditional macrocells, small cells and wireless ISP services cannot reach.

   We note that sub-criterion 6.1.1.c assesses "whether the Proposed Solution provides an innovative approach to improve productivity, efficiency or addresses an identified problem" and suggest that this should instead be a stand-alone and separately scored as Merit Criterion 6 – Innovation.

2) Capitalisation of backhaul costs: Zetifi notes that the Program aims to "provide economic and social benefits in regional, rural and remote areas". The lack of population density in remote areas results in a strong case for the capitalisation of backhaul costs under the Program to enable the delivery of place-based solutions in areas where a commercially viable market cannot be established without Department support.

Yours sincerely,