Regional Connectivity Ministers' Roundtable—Terms of Reference

October 2024

Purpose

The Regional Connectivity Ministers' Roundtable drives effective intergovernmental cooperation on connectivity issues affecting regional and rural Australians. While the focus of this forum is regional connectivity, it is acknowledged that connectivity is a broad term which includes a number of cross-cutting issues which are overseen by other forums such as the Planning Ministers' Meeting and Data and Digital Ministers' Meeting (DDMM). This forum, where possible, will complement and support the work of other Ministerial forums but is not intended to be a catch all for all communications-related issues.

Strategic Priorities

The Roundtable will identify best practice across jurisdictions and pursue areas for collaboration in the interests of improved connectivity outcomes, recognising the responsibility of the Commonwealth for national policy setting, managing the legislative and regulatory environment and achieving outcomes for regional and rural Australians.

Ministers discuss and seek to resolve barriers to improved connectivity across Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and as necessary task Senior Officials from the Commonwealth and jurisdictions, with collaboratively resolving or further investigating issues. The RCMR's annual work plan focuses on the following strategic priorities:

- improving connectivity outcomes for regional and rural Australians through a technology agnostic approach
- considering policy and regulatory approaches the Commonwealth can take in improving telecommunications resilience, the provision of data and investing in regional connectivity
- closing the digital divide between cities and regional locations, including through addressing Target 17 of Closing the Gap, in support of the DDMM's Digital Inclusion agenda and the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group
- improving digital inclusion and literacy in regional and rural areas.

Membership and Operations

The Chair of RCMR is the Commonwealth Minister for Communications. The RCMR comprises of ministerial representatives responsible for regional connectivity in each Australian jurisdiction.

The RCMR meets on a biannual basis with additional meetings as necessary.

Attendance of officials is at the discretion of individual Ministers, based on the level of support they require. Additional Ministers, Senior Officials and/or expert advisers may be invited to attend to support effective meetings and cross-portfolio collaboration and consultation subject to approval from the Chair.

Where Ministers are unable to attend a Roundtable, they should provide a proxy at an appropriately senior level, for example Director General/Secretary, Deputy Director General/Deputy Secretary, to attend on their behalf.

Decisions are made by ministerial consensus wherever possible.

Workplan and reporting

The RCMR is supported by a Senior Officials' Meeting which agrees to an annual workplan, which is developed in consultation with Ministers.

Secretariat

The Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts provides secretariat support and can be contacted at RegionalSOMandMRT@infrastructure.gov.au.

The Secretariat determines and maintains standard operating procedures in support of the Roundtable, including deadlines around the lodgement of submissions, agenda items and papers.