

26 July 2024

The Hon Alannah MacTiernan
Chair
Regional Independent Telecommunications Review Committee
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

E: RTIRC@infrastructure.gov.au

Dear Chair

Supplementary Submission

On 12 June 2024, the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils (WQAC) made a submission to the review, and [REDACTED], Executive Officer of the NWQROC attended the public consultation held in Mount Isa on 17 June 2024 on our behalf.

[REDACTED] spoke of our ongoing concern about the “Patchwork Quilt” of digital connectivity across Western Queensland caused by the lack of a strategic approach to the investment decisions of government to address the digital divide in rural and remote areas of Queensland and across Australia.

This was highlighted in the report of the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review Committee and from our perspective the situation remains largely unchanged.

Our submission to the Committee in 2021 and again on 12 June 2024 proposes a more coordinated and structured approach to planning, investing and delivery of telecommunication and digital infrastructure across our region.

It is our view that the telecommunications market is at best disjointed and in some respects fractured and cannot be relieved upon to generate fair and equitable digital connectivity for Western Queensland. The comments from consumers in our submission on 12 June 2024 are but a small sample of the problems we face.

Our submission proposed more funding for coordination, governance and leadership at the local/regional level. The Committee sought more details of how this might take place. It was always envisaged that a collaborative approach across jurisdictions and in conjunction with industry stakeholders was required. This was initially proposed at the time of the 2021 review and is set out in our [Blueprint and Terms of Reference](#) for the framework to implement a pilot to test the model based on the elements of – demand assessment, supply capability, community engagement and subsequent informed investment decision making by all parties.

As requested by the Committee at the Mount Isa consultation, attached is an updated outline of this [Framework and Operating Model 2024](#). It sets out the parties to the required collaborative approach, timelines, and costs. Again, it is seen as a pilot to test and refine the approach for wider application.

It is seen as providing a strategic approach to market facilitation and stimulation and a response to recommendations of the 2021 Review which we would ask you to again endorse.

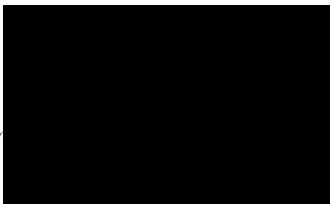
Of note are comments made by the Hon Michelle Rowland MP Minister for Communications in an interview on ABC Pilbara on 18 July 2024. In response to a question about the 2024 review the Minister said –

“ The Government is very committed to ensure that we utilize the best technologies, that we have a fit for purpose scheme. And this of course also operates in addition to our Better Connectivity Plan, which is the single largest injection – some \$2.2 billion into investing in regional areas. We want to make sure that is used properly, that it delivers the best outcomes, and we see meaningful change in terms of closing the digital gap.”

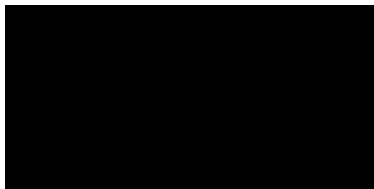
We believe our suggested approach in Western Queensland will greatly assist in achieving these outcomes.

For further information in relation to this submission please contact [REDACTED], Executive Officer, NWQROC at E: leadershipgroup@wqac.com.au or M: [REDACTED].

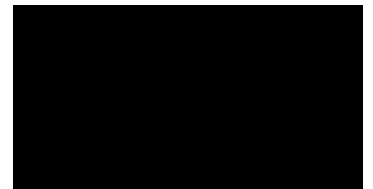
Yours sincerely



Chair
North West Queensland Regional
Organisation of Councils



Chair
Remote Area Planning and
Development Board



Chair
South West Queensland Regional
Organisation of Councils