

3 August 2018

Mr Sean Edwards

Chair, Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee

via email secretariat@rtirc.gov.au

ACMA2018/748

Dear Mr Edwards,

2018 Regional Telecommunications Review

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review.

The ACMA is Australia's regulator for telecommunications, broadcasting, radiocommunications and some online content. Of most relevance to the Committee's work are our responsibilities in regard to telecommunications consumer protections and our research agenda which are outlined below.

Consumer safeguards

The ACMA's regulatory role includes ensuring that consumer safeguards are efficient, effective and reflect community standards. The ACMA acknowledges that consumers in regional and remote areas may face particular difficulties getting and staying connected to reliable and affordable telecommunications services.

A key focus for the ACMA in 2018 is on improving the experience of consumers as they transition to and use services provided via the National Broadband Network (NBN). The ACMA has recently put in place a range of measures designed to:

- ensure consumers get the information they need to make informed decisions about the service they require on the NBN, and to choose a provider and plan to match;
- provide confidence to consumers that, at the time of connection, they will have a working NBN service and are not left without either their old service or a new service; and
- provide confidence for consumers that their complaints will be effectively managed if problems arise with an NBN service.

To achieve this the ACMA has made several new legislative instruments including the:

- Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints Handling) Industry Standard 2018
- Telecommunications (Consumer Complaints) Record-Keeping Rules 2018
- Telecommunications (NBN Consumer Information) Industry Standard;
- Telecommunications (NBN Continuity of Service) Industry Standard 2018. And
- Telecommunications Service Provider (NBN Service Migration) Determination 2018.

In the current financial year, the ACMA will have a strong focus on encouraging industry compliance with the new rules. More information about each of these instruments and the protections they offer is available on the ACMA website at

<https://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/moving-to-the-nbn-know-your-rights>

Research and analysis

The ACMA also undertakes research and analysis as part of its responsibilities under the *Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005* to report on matters affecting consumers or proposed consumers of telecommunications carriage services (paragraphs 8(1)(c) and (d) of the ACMA Act).

We publish an annual Communications Report on significant matters relating to the performance of carriers and carriage service providers, including consumer satisfaction, consumer benefits and quality of service. From time to time, dedicated research is also undertaken to help the ACMA better understand the levels of online engagement by Australian living in different regions.

Your Issues Paper cites data from the ACMA's Communications Report 2016–17 showing that the total volume of mobile and broadband data downloaded nationally increased by 43 per cent between June 2016 to June 2017 to over 3.1 million terabytes. In the December 2017 quarter, this figure rose to 3.7 million terabytes, 39 per cent higher than the volume downloaded in the December quarter of 2016.¹

The ACMA is also able to share additional data that highlights the importance of mobile coverage to Australians living in rural and regional areas. The number of Australian adults with a mobile phone and no fixed line telephone at home continues to grow, up from 6.13 million (33 per cent) at December 2016 to 7.06 million (37 per cent) at December 2017. Over 34 per cent of these people lived outside capital cities at December 2017.² This suggests the importance for consumers in these areas having reliable mobile coverage so that they can stay connected.

The ACMA intends to shortly release a report on its research into the experience of households and businesses moving to and using the NBN. The ACMA would be happy to provide the Committee with a detailed briefing on the findings that impact regional Australians.

Other Reviews

As you note in your Issues Paper, there are a number of other reviews underway that will inform the RTR, including the Consumer Safeguards Review, the Joint Standing Committee on the NBN, and ongoing work to develop the Universal Service Guarantee.

These reviews are considering a range of regulatory arrangements that the ACMA is responsible for monitoring and administering compliance. We are continuing to engage closely with the Department of Communications and the Arts on the development of a new Universal Service Guarantee and a future consumer safeguards framework.

The ACMA would welcome the opportunity to discuss our activities and provide any additional information that may inform your review. [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Nerida O'Loughlin

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, [8153.0—Internet Activity, Australia](#), December 2017.

² Roy Morgan Research, Roy Morgan Single Source, December 2017. Unpublished Roy Morgan data at time of publication.