

Broadband for the Bush Alliance Key Messages Statement

What is the Broadband for the Bush Alliance?

The Broadband for the Bush Alliance is a group of organisations that are committed to the digital inclusion of remote and rural Australia. The Alliance brings together a range of stakeholders with expertise in communications, remote service delivery, and community engagement.

Broadband for the Bush Alliance: Our primary objective

The Broadband for the Bush Alliance is a united voice for remote and rural Australians. We aim to ensure that remote and rural Australia does not become further disadvantaged in the area of communications. We seek practical outcomes that promote digital inclusion, using both fixed and mobile technologies.

The following are the key messages of the Broadband for the Bush Alliance:

The unfinished business of the NBN: remote and rural Australia requires a dedicated and sustained communications strategy

For remote and rural Australia to participate successfully in the national and global digital economy, it needs a targeted, evidence-based, well-resourced strategy. It must be recognised that policies and strategies aimed at the majority of Australians who live in major cities are not appropriate for remote and rural Australia. In addition to the Government's and the Opposition's NBN plans, a strategy aimed at improving communications in remote and rural Australia must:

- Recognise that fixed and mobile services are both equally important parts of the solution;
- Take account of existing communications infrastructure in remote and rural Australia and explore how to best use it, in conjunction infrastructure expansion activities;
- Apply the extended zone approach to mobile calls for greater affordability;
- Build the capacity of remote and rural Australians to participate effectively with the digital economy; and,
- Develop 'last mile' solutions to meet local needs.

Without a dedicated strategy, remote and rural Australia will be left to play 'catch up' with the rest of the world. It is critical the Federal Government work closely with organisations such as the Broadband for the Bush Alliance to develop a strategy that provides the best communications outcomes for those in remote and rural Australia.

Mobile communications is essential

The mobile phone is equally as important as the fixed-line. The advent of the smartphone offers Australians untold opportunities to engage with the digital economy, and is fast becoming Australia's most valued communications device. As the smartphone continues to revolutionise the way in which we conduct our personal and professional lives, it is critical that all Australians have access to a reliable mobile service.

As demand for access to broadband through mobile devices continues to grow, the time to work towards improved coverage is now. This point is strongly reflected in the findings of the 2011-2012 Regional Telecommunications Review, which show mobile communications to be the most important issue for remote and rural Australians.

It is clear that service providers will not independently provide further coverage in remote and rural Australia. Government has an obligation to ensure those living in remote and rural Australia can improve their personal well-being and business productivity through mobile communications.

The Broadband for the Bush Alliance has developed policy papers, which describe our policy proposals in further detail. We strongly recommend the political parties investigate our proposals.

Broadband for the Bush Alliance is:

Aboriginal Media Services Alliance NT, Australian Communications Consumers Action Network, Australian Indigenous Communications Association, Australian Smart Communities Association, Desert Knowledge Australia, Ethos Global Foundation, Indigenous Digital Excellence, Indigenous Remote Communications Association, Infoxchange, National Rural Health Alliance, Ninti One, Regional Development Australia NT, Remote Area Planning and Development Board, TelSoc.

The Alliance is auspiced by

