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Committee Secretary

Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee

PO Box 6100

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

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Dear Committee Secretary,

**CWAA submission – Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019
and Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019**

The Country Women's Association of Australia (CWAA) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission for the Committee's Inquiry into the above proposed legislative amendments, also known as the "Telecommunications Reform Package". The CWAA's objective is to advance the rights and equity of women, families and communities in Australia through advocacy and empowerment, especially for those living in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The CWA of Australia supports the passage of the Telecommunications Reform Package. The CWAA is a member of the Regional Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC). As such, we write in full support of the RRRCC submission to the Committee's inquiry. The RRRCC's specific telecommunications asks fall under its five main policy and advocacy objectives:

1. Guaranteed access to voice and data services.
2. Equitable voice and data services that meet minimum standards and reliability.
3. Continued program to expand mobile coverage.
4. Digital capacity building for regional, rural and remote Australia.
5. Affordable communications services for regional, rural and remote Australia.

The CWAA believes that the statutory infrastructure provider obligations contained within the Competition and Consumer Bill is an essential requirement to ensuring all Australians are able to access broadband services, regardless of where they are located. This is in line with the RRRCC very first policy objective, which seeks guaranteed access to voice and data services. The proposed legislation also allows for the setting of

minimum performance standards for broadband providers. This is particularly important for rural, regional and remote consumers in terms of a suitable service delivery and providers who are accountable.

The CWAA also supports the following elements of the Telecommunications Reform Package in particular:

- A sustainable and enduring funding stream to continually meet the needs of (rural, regional and remote) consumers.
- Ministerial ability to require accountability of service performance and service reliability measures.

As the RRRCC have outlined in their submission, there are a number of other telecommunications issues that continue to require the Committee's attention that are not in the remit of the Committee's current inquiry, mainly pertaining to affordability and service standard challenges faced by consumers. We will continue to raise these issues in the appropriate forums. The Telecommunications Reform Package has been the subject of extensive parliamentary process and inquiry since 2017. We support the Telecommunications Reform Package being passed through the Australian Parliament as a matter of priority.

Yours faithfully,

Tanya Cameron
National President