



17 January 2020

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

To whom it may concern,

RE: Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019

The New South Wales Farmers' Association ('the Association') welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019 ('the Bills').

The Association is Australia's largest State Farming Organisation, representing the interests of over 6,000 farmers in New South Wales (NSW). Access to reliable, affordable, quality telecommunications underpins the viability of farming businesses across NSW. It enables farming families to access business and education services, and promotes social connectivity.

Access to improved telecommunications services in rural, regional and remote Australia is also imperative to facilitate economic growth across the agricultural industry through innovation in production, improved market access and enhanced consumer connectivity.

There is enormous latent demand for data in rural, regional and remote Australia, especially on farm enterprises. It is critical that farmers overcome the digital divide that currently exists between rural and urban Australia.

The Association supports the intent of the Bills to promote competition and investment in the broadband network, and ensure longevity and certainty of funding for fixed wireless and satellite infrastructure. We welcome the provisions requiring regular review of the Regional Broadband Scheme (RBS) charge by the ACCC to ensure the charge is reasonable and consumers are protected.

The Association supports the introduction of statutory infrastructure provider (SIP) obligations for NBN Co and other carriers. We welcome the guarantee of access to the National Broadband Network and associated accountability provisions, providing consumers with a legal right to broadband service.

It is of the utmost importance that affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband be delivered to Australians living in rural, regional and remote areas. It is critical that the continuity of essential regional broadband services is maintained.

We welcome these Bills as a step in the direction of achieving this, and we look forward to the positive social and economic outcomes this will bring to farming families and businesses. However, amongst other telecommunications challenges facing rural, regional and remote Australians, we will continue to advocate for further improvements in affordability, reliability and speed of broadband services.

NSW Farmers' Association

The Association appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer) Bill 2019 and the Telecommunications (Regional Broadband Scheme) Charge Bill 2019. Should further information be required please contact Kathy Rankin, Policy Director

Yours sincerely

Garry Grant
Chair, Rural Affairs Committee