

WAFarmers

The Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry recently into the deployment, adoption and application of 5G in Australia

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Communications

WAFarmers Submission

WAFarmers is the peak body for farmers in Western Australia we are a member organisation of the National Farmers Federation.

There are three main benefits of 5G for Australian Agriculture and Regional Australia

- additional bandwidth
- faster speeds
- reduced latency

This is specifically important with the ever increasing reliance on data traffic which is growing approximately 40% year on year on the mobile network particularly in regional areas.

To cater for this demand Australia needs to deploy the most efficient technology.

Regionally we are seeing a huge increase in data demands and the NFF 2030 strategy notes that digital technology is key to unlocking innovation in the Ag sector.

The sector is currently striving to embrace the technology yet in many cases is still hampered by lack of mobile data connectivity and NBN has not delivered in its promise to provide high speed broadband across the country with most of regional WA reliant on satellite services or fixed wireless.

Australia needs 5G as it will unlock the potential for farmers and agri-business to stay connected to the latest innovations which will enable a future set of technologies such as autonomous vehicles, virtual and augmented reality, drones, artificial intelligence, machine learning, connected paddock to the plate food safety, and remote surgery and health care.

Many of these technologies not only exist today, they will soon be mainstream. All of these technologies rely on the quality of the underlying telecommunication networks that is why 5G is so important to the technology innovation we are seeing today.

We note that 5G has attracted critics relating to its perceived health risks, our response to these claims is the same that we have for critics of agricultural chemicals we need to look to the experts

and regulators to apply evidence based research and scientific principles to prove or disprove any claims.

WAFarmers is confident that the electromagnetic emissions (EME) testing and analysis on the 5G network at the 3.5^Hz commercial network used at the base stations has confirmed that the EME levels are similar to the existing mobile technologies and well below the EME safety limits.

Similarly, to ag chemicals, independent health authorities both in Australia and overseas require any new product to be proved for safe use and we are confident that 5G has proven to be safe to be rolled out in Australia.

5G has the potential to drive the next generation of productivity in agriculture. It will help automate farming processes and drive productivity through precision agriculture which will help reduce farmers carbon footprint and the overuse of fertilisers and chemicals. It will allow farmers to apply smart farming mega data technology on a site specific basis taking into account the unique characteristics of each square metre of farmland.

Water management, animal welfare, crop monitoring, chemical and fertiliser application, logistics management, linking devices to services to decision makers. will all benefit from the roll out of 5G. The opportunities to manage the risk of drought and excessive irrigated water use alone should justify strong government support to fast track its roll out across regional Australia.

The question our members ask is not when but how fast.

[REDACTED]

Trevor Whittington
CEO WAFarmers

[REDACTED]

24 Oct 2019