



Communications – Vital for the Bush

Policy: ICPA seeks to ensure, as the minimum standard of communications for rural and remote residents, services at a level at least equivalent to that available to the majority of urban residents.

- Rural children need a reliable, affordable communications service for education
- The dependence on reliable telecommunication services increases with geographic isolation.
- Rural and remote students often have no regular face-to-face access to services, and rely on telephone and data services for education, health and social needs.
- ICPA (Aust) encourages all governments and service providers, to investigate the utilisation of existing communications infrastructure and resources, (particularly in rural and remote areas) to provide alternatives to satellite internet delivery. This would allow more customers to access fixed wireless internet services and reduce the number of people dependent on satellite internet, further reducing the risk of satellite congestion.
- ICPA (Aust) supports the campaign to guarantee the timely upgrade of the mobile network throughout rural and remote Australia. We also advocate that the minimum standard be the ability to make a '000' call from a mobile to enable access to emergency services. Our rural and remote members and their families require certainty that mobile coverage is guaranteed for emergency services, education and functioning of communities. Expanding mobile coverage has clear public safety, economic and social benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- That quality communication services are comparable to those available in urban areas – similar reliability, economy, features, voice quality and data rates.
- That fast, reliable and affordable two-way voice and data communication are available to all students.
- That mobile phone service coverage increases throughout rural and remote Australia.
- For those who have no mobile coverage, a mandated right to a fixed telephone service and a reliability guarantee is essential.
- Assurance that there is continued investment in the **nbn** Fixed Wireless network, to ensure that the capacity of the **nbn**'s Long Term Satellites is managed.
- Reform of the Universal Service Obligation to ensure funding is allocated to best meet the needs of rural Australia.