

21st October 2022

Productivity Inquiry
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Productivity Commission,

Re: 5-year Productivity Inquiry: Australia's data and digital dividend

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) and Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Productivity Commission (PC) *5-year Productivity Inquiry: Australia's data and digital dividend*.

The NFF is the voice of Australian farmers. The NFF was established in 1979 as the national peak body representing farmers and more broadly, agriculture across Australia. The NFF's membership comprises all of Australia's major agricultural commodities across the supply chain. Operating under a federated structure, individual farmers join their respective state farm organisation and/or national commodity council. These organisations form the NFF.

The NFF has a target of reaching \$100 billion in farm gate output by 2030. This target forms part of our ambitious 2030 Roadmap – our plan to grow and advance our sector in the coming decade. A key element to achieving this target will be ongoing improvements to telecommunications and connectivity services in regional Australia. The NFF is committed to advocating for regional communities to have **accessible, reliable, quality and affordable** telecommunications and connectivity services.

The RRRCC was formed in 2016 to raise awareness of the vital role of connectivity for regional, rural, and remote Australians and to advocate for continued improvements. RRRCC members, as the on-ground voice of regional Australians, have strong stakes in the decisions made for the communications industry. The NFF provides secretariat services to the RRRCC. **Attachment A** outlines the members of the RRRCC.

The RRRCC's advocacy efforts are focused on five high-level [goals](#), under which we have articulated a number of specific asks. The RRRCC's five goals are:

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 NFF supports these goals.

We would like to note our support for previous infrastructure investment programs, such as the Mobile Black Spots Program, and the Regional Connectivity Program. Due to reduced commercial incentives to invest in regional, rural, and remote Australia, there continues to be a need for additional funding to address connectivity gaps. Future investment should consider:

- The implementation of more innovative and flexible investment program guidelines.
- Increased funding for 'last mile' connectivity solutions, including on-property signal enhancers and community access facilities.
- Greater support for communities seeking to take part in place-based programs, such as increased educational resources and facilitators to assist local communities.
- The ability of technology to meet the needs of communities whilst encouraging retail competition.

Mobile connectivity is important to all Australians. The NFF and RRRCC support investment programs aimed at improving and expanding mobile coverage, for all regional, rural and remote Australians.

The NFF and the RRRCC also support the submission made by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network.

Should you seek any further information please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Christopher Young, General Manager, Rural Affairs

Yours sincerely,

TONY MAHAR
Chief Executive Officer
National Farmers' Federation

Attachment A Members of the RRRCC

