



Fact sheet: Telecommunications

Access to telecommunications and the reliability of telecommunications services are a fundamental issue for people living in rural and regional Australia. These services are not a nice-to-have, but a necessity. Telecommunications are essential for anyone running a business in rural Australia, they keep families and communities in touch and they provide a lifeline in times of emergencies such as natural disasters and medical situations. Patchiness and quality of mobile phone coverage and adequate delivery and service of landline telecommunications remain as issues for many people living in rural Australia.



Broadband telecommunications services have continued to present a challenge for many Australian farmers. Poor download speeds, reliability and quality of landline and satellite broadband services and the patchiness of mobile broadband have left many farmers inadequately serviced. Whilst farmers tend to embrace technology and innovation, the current level of access and service has hindered uptake. Increasingly Government and businesses rely on access to broadband to provide access to services, and modern farm businesses are using information technologies to assist in production, risk management and marketing activities.



Broadband access and uptake across rural Australia has lagged behind the cities and this needs to be addressed. For this reason, it is important that strategies are developed to address this gap and ensure agricultural industries realise the productivity and efficiency gains that are available through the use of information technology and broadband.



The NFF has sought to ensure that Australian farmers – including those in the most remote areas of the country – have secure access to telecommunication services as well as upgrades to these services. It is important that people living in rural Australia are not disadvantaged, and that services are delivered to rural Australians at metro-comparable prices – meaning they are equitable and affordable.

NFF's focus has been on ensuring that access to affordable quality telecommunications services for farmers and rural communities is delivered in a competitive marketplace, rather than on the precise mechanism through which this is achieved or how the service is delivered.



This has led the NFF to concentrate on the "rules" to guarantee minimum standards of service to farmers and regional communities. It is important that: there is a transparent process for determining the performance standards of telecommunications services in regional Australia; these standards are clearly articulated by government; and service providers deliver against these performance standards.

