

Broadband speed report card welcomed by bush communications coalition

The Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) has welcomed a new broadband performance monitoring program to be administered by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC).

Announced last Friday, the program will see Australian consumers receive independent information about broadband speeds based on feedback from remote testing at more than 4000 households.

"This is a welcome measure and we congratulate the Australian Government on the initiative," Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) CEO, Teresa Corbin said.

"The top complaint about internet services to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) is in relation to faulty services and slow speeds, indicating there is a gap between consumer expectations of how their services will perform, and actual performance.

"This program will provide consumers the needed information on average performance to make considered purchasing choices."

National Farmers' Federation (NFF) President, Fiona Simson, said while the initiative was welcomed the monitoring program could go further.

"At the moment the program will only cover fixed line services, and it is fair to say that the majority of membership across the RRRCC accesses NBN services either through fixed wireless or the Sky Muster satellite.

"There is also a need for greater understanding and accountability around how these services are performing."

"It is telling that even the ACCC Commissioner, Rod Sims, has acknowledged that the majority of complaints are coming from regional areas," Ms Simson said.

The Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition is a group of like-minded organisations who have come together to end the data drought and champion better communications services for consumers and small businesses living in rural, remote or regional area

The RRRCC is calling on the Government to commit to five actions:

1. A universal service obligation for both voice and data.
2. Customer service guarantees to deliver more accountability from providers and nbn.
3. Long term public funding for open access mobile network expansion (blackspots).
4. Fair and equitable access to Sky Muster satellite for those with a genuine need for the service.
5. Fully resourced capacity-building programs that build digital ability

The RRRCC's latest submission to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the National Broadband Network can be found here <http://www.nff.org.au/submissions-search.html?subcategoryid=3418>

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