



THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

THE HON MARK COULTON MP
Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications
and Local Government

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Applications open for Alternative Voice Services Trials

The Australian Government is calling for applications under the Alternative Voice Services Trials program, to test new ways of delivering voice services in rural and remote Australia.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP said the program aims to encourage competition and assess technology options to deliver improved services for rural and remote communities.

“Alternative voice services could be delivered using existing or new radiocommunications and satellite technologies to deliver improved service quality, greater reliability, more redundancy and greater functionality,” Minister Fletcher said.

Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government, the Hon Mark Coulton MP, said the trials will focus on rural and remote areas outside NBN Co’s fixed line footprint, including areas serviced by Telstra’s high capacity radio concentrator (HCRC) network.

“This is an opportunity for the telecommunications industry to demonstrate what it can offer consumers and I strongly encourage service providers to come forward and apply,” said Minister Coulton.

“I look forward to chairing a stakeholder reference group, which will provide an important sounding board for matters affecting rural and remote consumers.”

The Alternative Voice Services Trials program was announced as part of the Government’s response to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review, which identified a need to address the performance and longevity of the current high capacity radio concentrator networks.

The Government is providing \$2 million in funding for the trials as part of the \$220 million Stronger Regional Digital Connectivity Package.

The program guidelines are available on [GrantConnect](#). Applications close 9:00am on 14 September 2020.

ENDS

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Background

Applications will be assessed on the solution proposed, the applicants' capacity to deliver the solution, its cost and overall value for money.

Applicants must either be a carriage service provider, or a consortium with at least one organisation that is a carriage service provider.

While applicants will have the primary responsibility for attracting consumers to their trials, the Government will establish a register for people interested in joining the trials.

A stakeholder reference group representing rural and remote consumers is being established to help raise awareness of the trials and provide feedback to the Government.

The Government expects trials to be conducted over a period of 12 months, with all trials to be complete by March 2022.