



**THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP**

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts

**THE HON MARK COULTON MP**

Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government

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**Investing more in regional voice services to improve calls in the bush**

A range of new solutions will be trialled to find better ways to deliver voice calls for rural and remote Australians.

Minister for Communications, Urban Infrastructure, Cities and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, today announced that Optus, Pivotal and Telstra have been awarded grants under the final tranche of the Morrison Government's \$2 million Alternative Voice Services Trials (AVST) Program.

"While Optus, Pivotal and Telstra are already providing voice services across Australia, the grants will enable interested consumers to try out new types of services without additional cost," Minister Fletcher said.

Regional Communications Minister, Mark Coulton said this was an excellent opportunity for people looking for a better quality of service in regional areas to try something new.

"I encourage rural people interested in trying this new technology and equipment to register their interest to take part in the trials," Minister Coulton said.

"To ensure that we get a service in the future that meets the needs of as many people as possible, it's imperative that this technology is trialled in a range of conditions and locations."

The latest tranche of trials includes:

- Optus offering 15 trial services at pre-determined regional locations in NSW, Queensland and SA. It will trial fixed and mobile voice calls and offer optional broadband data access with backhaul provided through its satellite network;
- Pivotal offering up to 60 trial services at 30 locations in regional and remote areas of Australia. Those participating will be able to use the full functionality of mobile handsets to make and receive VoIP calls when at home or out and about; and
- Telstra offering up to 300 trial services, in a range of diverse locations across Australia. The majority of services will be fixed voice services delivered using its 4G network. Telstra will also trial a small number of voice services delivered over satellite.

Some solutions include antennas and battery back up at homes to provide participants with a more robust service and better in-home call quality.

The companies will ramp up recruitment of participants for the trials in the coming months. Consumers interested in participating in the trials should stay tuned for details.

More information on the AVST Program, including on all grantees and their offers and how consumers can register their interest to participate in the trials, is available on the [Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications website](#).