

15 July 2015

Australian Pork Limited  
ABN: 83 092 783 278

Regional Telecommunications Review Secretariat  
Department of Communications  
GPO Box 2154  
CANBERRA ACT 260  
via email: [secretariat@rtirc.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@rtirc.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Regional Telecommunications Review**

Australian Pork Limited (APL) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission into the Regional Telecommunications Review to assess the adequacy of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia and whether people in these areas have equitable access to these services.

APL is the national representative body for Australian pig producers. The Australian pork industry employs more than 20,000 people in Australia and contributes approximately \$2.8 billion in gross domestic product to the Australian economy. The pork industry contributes approximately 2.13% of total Australian farm production with roughly 1500 pig farmers producing around 4.8 million pigs annually.

As the national organisation representing Australian pork producers APL aspires to improve workplace safety, biosecurity, animal health and welfare, food safety and public health. To ensure these outcomes it is critical that the pork industry have access to telecommunications systems that are reliable, efficient and cost effective.

A more effective telecommunications system will improve the ability of people in rural and regional Australia to communicate and conduct business both locally and internationally. It will also play a vital role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of those living in rural and remote areas of Australia.

APL considers that the current standard of services impede the uptake of new and improved technology. Significant improvements to telecommunication services are required if pork producers are to fully realise potential productivity gains, enhance food safety and traceability while operating in continually evolving and dynamic market environments. The importance of effective and efficient telecommunications that support business performance and innovation in regional Australia cannot be overstated.

Australia's biosecurity system provides preferred access to many international markets. Improved technology will vastly improve Australia's ability to combat a disease outbreak, should it occur, through faster and more accurate real-time movements of livestock. Effective implementation of such a system requires continual access to wireless or mobile networks. It is unlikely that such a system will be effectively implemented without further improvements in this technology and its supporting infrastructure. As the cost of a disease incursion could run into the tens of billions of dollars any investment in technology that improves the ability to combat disease outbreaks makes sound business sense.

Recently, a number of incidents have occurred on pig farms that resulted in the death of large numbers of pigs at significant cost and trauma to the producer and staff involved. In at least one incident, a major factor exacerbating the situation was an inability for a security company to contact employees on farm to alert them to the incident as it was occurring.

Along with livestock producers, law enforcement and emergency services are intrinsically linked to the availability and quality of telecommunications. Providing pork producers with an effective telecommunications system that incorporates the capacity to fully implement proper security and surveillance systems will enhance the capacity of producers to deal with a range of emergency situations on their properties.

One such example is the use of mobile technology to alert producers and their employees to trespassers. This is critically important as pig farms have high biosecurity requirements to stop both endemic and exotic diseases entering naïve pig herds. At the extreme end, producers may need to de-populate a piggery to control disease and this can cost \$1500/sow, in addition to other costs of disease outbreaks. However, not all producers have good mobile network coverage required to underpin these systems.

Throughout the pork industry, and agriculture generally, there is an increasing use of wireless technology to inform management decisions and record and process data in the field. Many producers are unable to fully realise the benefits of this technology without further improvements in mobile coverage or to infrastructure that supports the operation of private local networks.

APL acknowledges the Mobile Black Spot Programme is designed to address the shortfalls in mobile coverage and would strongly encourage that this program be complemented with innovative solutions that will fully utilise the potential of the National Broadband Network.

Should you have any questions about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact John McGoverne

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deb Kerr". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Deb Kerr  
General Manager, Policy