

Media Release

The Hon Jaala Pulford MLC

Minister for Employment

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy

Minister for Small Business

Minister for Resources



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CALL TO KEEP REGIONS CONNECTED WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST

The Andrews Labor Government is calling on the Commonwealth to help make it easier for people in regional and rural areas to connect to vital telecommunications, especially during emergencies.

Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford today shared details of the Government's submission to the Commonwealth's *Regional Telecommunications Review* in the Victorian Parliament.

The review takes place every three years to examine connectivity and communications services in parts of the country where digital access can often be difficult.

Victoria's submission encourages the Commonwealth to work closely with the telecommunications industry to ensure regional communities can access multiple mobile providers during emergencies such as bushfires, extreme storms and floods.

The submission urges the Commonwealth to boost its investment in telecommunications across regional areas so Australians can stay better connected when they need it most.

The need for better telecommunication services has become even more pressing over the past two years as Victoria experienced devastating bushfires and storms, with reliable and affordable telecommunications services proving vital in a crisis.

People can always call Triple Zero (000), regardless of which provider they are with. If this type of connectivity was extended to other mobile and broadband services during emergencies, people would have access to loved ones and the information they need from whichever network was available.

The Labor Government has delivered record amounts of funding to improve connectivity in regional and rural areas since 2014.

The Labor Government is also helping to improve mobile and broadband coverage in Victoria by fast-tracking connectivity across the state through the \$550 million *Connecting Victoria* program.

Connecting Victoria has consulted with Victorians to learn more about mobile and broadband connectivity gaps and challenges that people are experiencing. Victorians told us that mobile coverage during emergencies is a critical issue across the state.

The Government's submission to the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review has been published online at infrastructure.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"Staying connected during emergencies is essential, particularly for our rural and remote communities – services need to be improved for people's safety, health and wellbeing."

"Everyone deserves to feel safe, which is why we're talking to communities and businesses to find out how best to give people the connectivity they need."

"While our work is progressing, it is important more investment at the Commonwealth level is made in regional and rural parts of the state that need it most."

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