

Reliable telecommunications critical to supporting the health needs of all Australians

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‘The integration of virtual health care services with local health service pathways is a crucial issue for our health system,’ says Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) Acting Chief Executive Kylie Woolcock.

‘And in rural and remote areas, shifts to integrate such services will be dependent on reliable telecommunications.’

AHHA shared these views with the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee, who have just delivered their final report and recommendations to the Australian Government.

‘While not publicly released, the report’s title, *A step change in demand*, shows that the Review Committee recognises that there has been a significant increase in demand for more accessible, competitive and reliable telecommunications,’ says Ms Woolcock.

‘As the Australian Government considers the report’s findings and recommendations, they must ensure access to connectivity is sufficient for supporting the health needs of Australians in rural and remote areas.

‘We know that the health advantages of living away from Australia’s major cities can be outweighed by many factors associated with poor health and shorter life expectancy for many rural people,’ says Ms Woolcock

‘This is compounded by extreme heat and weather events, such as bushfires, floods and cyclones, which we know can impact critical infrastructure for health service delivery, including telecommunications. This has serious repercussions for both the rural health workforce and the communities they serve.

‘While rapid advancements in technology will allow for the creation of more appropriate models of care and provide much needed support for the health workforce, this is all dependent on digital connectivity,’ says Ms Woolcock.

AHHA looks forward to the Government’s response to the report early in the New Year.

More information on AHHA is available at ahha.asn.au. This media release is available [online](#).

The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is the national peak body for public and not-for-profit hospitals, Primary Health Networks, and community and primary healthcare services.