



The Hon Linda Burney MP
Minister for Indigenous Australians

The Hon Michelle Rowland MP
Minister for Communications

MEDIA RELEASE

Additional funding to drive digital inclusion for First Nations communities

The Albanese Government has bolstered its commitment to narrowing the digital divide for First Nations Australians by providing an additional \$10 million in funding to the latest round of the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP).

This funding will deliver dedicated solutions to improve digital connectivity for First Nations communities in Central Australia.

Improvements in digital connectivity will help address low levels of digital inclusion for individuals and communities and, in turn, support improved social inclusion and access to online services including health, education and social support services.

This commitment will increase the Government's total funding available under the combined grant opportunity to **\$160 million**, bringing together the RCP and the Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) across two streams:

- \$110 million under **Round 3 of the RCP**, including indicative funding for solutions that improve telecommunications infrastructure in First Nations communities in eligible areas across Australia (\$15 million) and in Central Australia (\$10 million).
- \$50 million under **Round 7 of the MBSP**, including indicative funding of \$7.5 million for solutions that provide new mobile coverage in First Nations communities.

The Government will also extend the application period for the combined grant opportunity by six weeks to **Wednesday 12 July 2023**, providing more time for applicants to develop proposals that support First Nations communities and to ensure substantial consultation with stakeholders, including local communities and councils.

This funding opportunity will contribute to real progress against the *Access to Information* target under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, for which the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group is advising Government.

The additional \$10 million will be delivered as part of the Albanese Government's \$250 million plan for *A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*.

The Albanese Government's broader *Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and*

Rural Australia is providing more than \$1.1 billion to rural and regional communities – including \$656 million to improve mobile and broadband connectivity and resilience in rural and regional Australia.

Revised Program Guidelines outlining the additional funding arrangements are available on the GrantConnect website: www.grants.gov.au (see current Grant Opportunity GO6185).

Further information about the RCP Round 3 and MBSP Round 7 is available on the Department's website: www.infrastructure.gov.au/rcp and www.infrastructure.gov.au/mbsp

Quotes attributable to Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Linda Burney MP:

“This additional investment is great news for First Nations people in remote communities. It will support projects that improve mobile phone coverage and boost the speed and reliability of internet connections.

“This means better communication with friends and family, and easier to access to all the education, health, employment and business opportunities the internet provides.

“It’s one of the ways the Government is working to close the gap and build a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.”

Quotes attributable to Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland MP:

“Narrowing the digital divide for First Nations Australians is a top priority for the Albanese Government.

“This additional funding will help ensure those in First Nations communities in Central Australia and other underserved regions have access to better mobile connectivity and improved telecommunications infrastructure; both of which are vital to keep people connected, run businesses, and call for help during an emergency.

“These two streams of the Regional Connectivity and Mobile Black Spot Programs will support solutions that contribute towards achieving Target 17 of the Closing the Gap initiative, aiming to ensure First Nations people have equal levels of digital inclusion by 2026.

“One message that I have heard clearly from the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group is the importance of ensuring adequate time for consultation and collaboration to ensure solutions best meet the priorities of communities. With the benefit of the additional time we have provided, I encourage all community members and stakeholders to work closely together and help to deliver meaningful connectivity and coverage solutions.”

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