

A woman with curly hair is smiling and talking on a mobile phone. She is wearing a dark top and a brown leather apron. In the foreground, there are several sheets of paper, some of which she is looking at. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a desk or office environment. The image is overlaid with a green geometric shape in the top right corner.

# Better Approvals for Business

*Supporting Victoria's Economic Recovery*

TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
PROVISIONS REVIEW

Action Statement

## Better Approvals for Business program

The Victorian Government is delivering regulatory reform to support the State's economic recovery and growth as part of the 2020-21 Budget commitment. A high performing regulatory system provides many benefits, including productive, confident and innovative businesses.

The Telecommunications Infrastructure Provisions review is the first of a series of rolling reviews undertaken as part of the Victorian Government's Better Approvals for Business program. Reviews under the program are undertaken from the perspective of business and industry to identify tangible, practical reforms that improve planning and other business approvals processes, and which can be implemented in the short to medium term.

This review was delivered by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Telecommunications services are vital for supporting economic and social outcomes, as well as liveability and public safety across Victoria. The COVID-19 pandemic has further emphasised the importance of telecommunications infrastructure, placing much greater reliance on accessing high-quality, reliable telecommunications services wherever people live, work and visit. The ease with which telecommunications infrastructure can be deployed across the state plays a significant role in meeting these objectives.

Despite the importance of telecommunications infrastructure, the review found that current approvals processes can often be unclear and difficult to navigate for both telecommunications providers and councils, and they have not kept up to date with the emergence of new technology. This results in delays and added costs for telecommunications providers and councils from having to navigate outdated planning processes. Ultimately, this directly impacts the ability of businesses, industry and the broader community to access digital telecommunications infrastructure services.



### Telecommunications in Victoria

**\$7.3 BILLION**

of gross value added to the Victorian economy<sup>1</sup>

**\$12 BILLION**

of goods and services produced by this industry are used by other Victorian industries in their production<sup>2</sup>

**APPROX. 26,000**

people are employed in the telecommunications industry<sup>3</sup>

### Better Approvals for Business

#### Telecommunications Infrastructure Provisions Review

The telecommunications review focused on opportunities to improve planning and related processes to support better delivery of digital telecommunications infrastructure in Victoria. The review brought telecommunications providers and councils together through a co-design process to build an improved understanding of key issues and develop targeted and practical solutions.

The reforms developed as part of this review provide greater clarity and consistency in the regulatory processes for telecommunications infrastructure approvals, for both telecommunications providers and councils. The reforms also aim to promote the benefits that flow from improved telecommunications infrastructure to businesses and the broader community, thereby strengthening community support for the roll-out of telecommunications infrastructure. These reforms directly support the Victorian Government's broader commitment to ensuring Victorians have access to better digital services, including through the \$550 million Connecting Victoria program.

1. REPLAN, Victoria (2020 Release 2) – published Sept 2021.

2. REPLAN, Victoria (2020 Release 2) – published Sept 2021.

3. Average of last four quarters of data, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Oct 2021.

## Better Approvals for Business program

### Telecommunications Infrastructure Provisions Review Reforms



#### **Code of Practice for Telecommunications Facilities in Victoria 2004 and Victoria Planning Provisions**

**Update or replace the Code of Practice for Telecommunications Facilities in Victoria 2004.**

Consult with telecommunications providers and councils to ensure updated planning provisions are contemporary and fit for purpose.

**Identify permit exemptions to encourage development of certain types of facilities or in certain areas.**

Review permit exemptions and consider changes to encourage development of new telecommunications facilities, as appropriate to the area.

**Determine appropriate exemptions for public notice and third-party appeals.**

Review existing pathways and consider when it may be appropriate to expand exemptions, for example using approaches like VicSmart.

**Clarify the approach to consideration of electromagnetic energy (EME) standards.**

Address confusion about the responsible regulator for EME standards of telecommunications facilities. Make information about the regulators more readily available to councils, and provide guidance material councils can share with community members about where to direct their queries in relation to EME.



#### **Planning application and approval processes**

**Develop an informational resource that describes when co-location of telecommunications facilities is feasible and the situations in which there are genuine constraints to co-location.**

Provide more clarity about what the genuine constraints to co-location of telecommunications facilities are by developing guidance, with input from telecommunications providers and councils.

**Increase consistency of delegation approaches across councils.**

Review the responsible authority delegations across Victoria and provide a model deed of delegation.

**Evidence and proactively communicate the value and benefits of telecommunications infrastructure and services for communities, businesses and emergency management outcomes.**

Develop communications materials using an evidence-based approach that can be shared with councils.



#### **Land access for telecommunication providers**

**Develop and publish a checklist and guidance to create more transparency around processes for Crown Land leases.**

Develop a checklist to support telecommunication providers to assess leasing requirements for different types of Crown Land sites. This will include guidance material about how to assess items in the checklist.

**Strengthen the Victorian Government's advocacy for better telecommunications outcomes for business and the broader community, including as part of planning for new growth areas.**

Advocate for better digital telecommunications outcomes for the Victorian community, including support for earlier consideration of the locations for mobile connections in new suburbs.

Reforms that relate to Victoria's planning provisions, including updating or replacing the *Code of Practice for Telecommunications Facilities in Victoria 2004* to ensure it meets the needs of service users and providers, will be implemented as part of the broader work the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning is undertaking, including through Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 (Action 15).

The other reforms will be implemented by the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (Land Management).

## Benefits of reforms

These reforms will deliver both direct benefits to telecommunications infrastructure providers and councils, and flow-on benefits to the broader community. The direct benefits include reduced regulatory burden for telecommunication infrastructure providers by reducing the time and cost associated with the approval processes for telecommunication infrastructure. Councils are also expected to directly benefit from the reforms as a result of more streamlined processes. The indirect, flow-on benefits to Victorian businesses, industry and the broader community are expected to be substantial. This is particularly the case for rural and regional communities, which tend to experience greater issues in coverage, quality and resilience of services.

### Despite investment and improvements in digital telecommunication coverage, important connectivity challenges still impact parts of the state:

- ▶ **Businesses** – Many businesses are dependent on Fixed Wireless or Satellite connectivity and struggle with mobile connectivity and basic online operations.
- ▶ **Remote Work and Study** – People working and studying across regional, rural areas and townships regularly experience connectivity challenges.
- ▶ **Agriculture** – Lack of connectivity limits innovation and adoption of digital solutions by Victoria's agriculture industries.
- ▶ **Visitor Economy** – Mobile connectivity falls short of demand during peak tourist seasons, impacting visitor experience and regional growth.
- ▶ **Emergency Management** – Disrupted connectivity during storms and bushfire puts the community at risk if they are unable to access help when needed.
- ▶ **Healthcare** – Current speeds and bandwidth are inadequate in certain areas to support the shift to online, real-time and remote care.
- ▶ **Bushfire Risk for New Residential Areas** – Growth suburbs in bushfire prone areas suffer from poor mobile coverage, impacting on residents' access to emergency notifications.

## Flow-on benefits from supporting better digital telecommunications services across Victoria

The reforms will support wider economic benefits to businesses and the community through improved access to digital services. This reform package and broader Government commitments, such as the Connecting Victoria Program, will help to bring forward these benefits by supporting better digital telecommunications services across Victoria through faster delivery of telecommunications infrastructure.

### Supporting growth in the Victorian economy:

Economic analysis indicates the next generation of mobile network technologies, 5G, has the potential to deliver significant economic benefits to the Victorian economy, estimated at \$6 billion in potential value add from 2022-26.<sup>5</sup> \$1 billion of this potential value add will occur across the regional and rural economy.<sup>6</sup>

### Connecting regional and remote communities:

Supporting regional industry and communities through better connectivity for business growth, liveability, remote work and emergency resilience.

### Supporting industry and jobs:

Digital technology and innovation drive productivity and competitiveness. Increasing participation in the digital economy enables remote working and supports innovation and employment as jobs are becoming increasingly digital, both through growing use of digital tools in all jobs and new jobs in technology and data.

### Strengthening Victoria's natural disaster resilience:

Strengthening Victoria's natural disaster resilience to ensure people can communicate and receive information during emergencies or natural disasters is crucial in coordinating response and recovery efforts.

**Helping to unlock broader economic benefits: Digital technologies could provide a potential \$6 billion in value add to the Victorian economy in the next 5 years (to 2026).<sup>7</sup>**

**Reforms are expected to deliver \$3.7 million per year<sup>4</sup> in direct benefits to telecommunication infrastructure providers, resulting from reduced time and costs associated with improvement to approvals process.**

4. NOUS Group analysis using Department of Treasury and Finance Regulatory Change Measurement methodology.

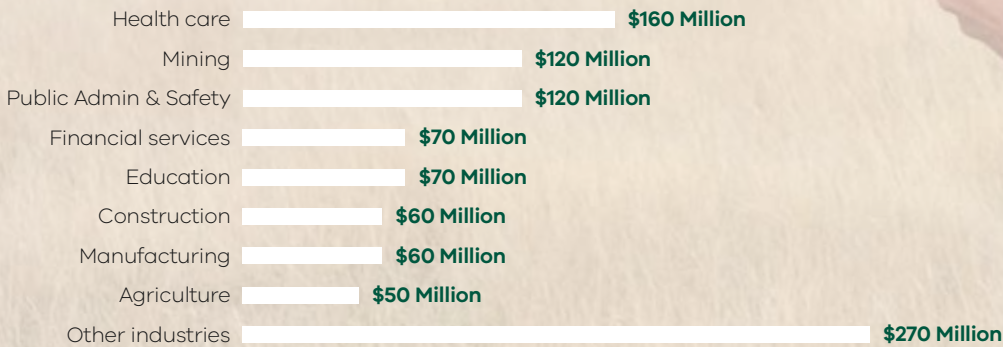
5. PwC Australia Economic Modelling and Analysis.

6. PwC Australia Economic Modelling and Analysis.

7. PwC Australia Economic Modelling and Analysis.

# HELPING TO UNLOCK BROADER ECONOMIC BENEFITS:

Digital technologies could provide a potential \$1 billion in value add to the Regional and Rural Victorian economy in the next 5 years (to 2026).<sup>8</sup>



8. PwC Australia Economic Modelling and Analysis.

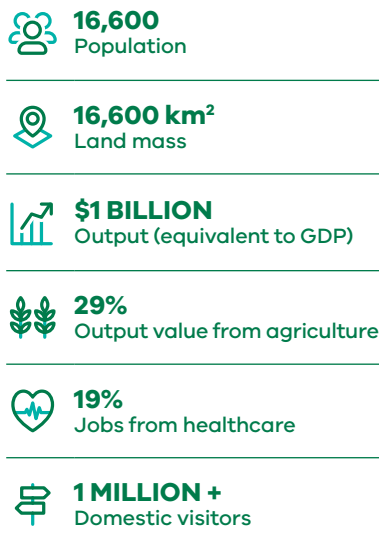
## Digital connectivity is critical to the advancement and liveability of communities across regional Victoria

### Case Study:

#### Southern Grampians Shire

Hamilton, the main retail and service centre, supports the surrounding areas of Balmoral, Branxholme, Byaduk, Dunkeld, Cavendish, Coleraine, Glenthompson, Peshurst and Tarrington.

Supporting broader flow-on benefits for Victorian communities through access to improved digital services by continued investment and more efficient deployment of telecommunications infrastructure. **\$8.4 MILLION** potential economic uplift from 5G in the Southern Grampians region in the next 5 years (to 2026)



### How digital connectivity supports important outcomes in the region

- Enables emergency alert broadcast solutions in **high bushfire risk** areas like the Grampians and assists paramedics with real-time data to manage critical situations more efficiently.
- Enables better virtualised **healthcare** closer to the home by providing doctors with real-time patient data and remote diagnosis capability.
- Encourages investment and innovation in **agri-tech**, helping farmers yield better returns through remotely controlling machinery and real-time data monitoring of soil conditions and livestock movements.
- Improves access to quality, interactive **education** in inclusive and affordable ways, and helps facilities like Baimbridge College and the Ballarat Road Education Precinct to realise their full potential.
- Supports live streaming of arts, music, and sporting events, engages a wider audience and meets the evolving **tourism and entertainment** needs in areas like Dunkeld.

Source: PwC Australia Economic Modelling and Analysis

**Case Study:**

## Wangaratta

Situated on the Hume Freeway, and the Melbourne to Sydney rail line, Wangaratta is a regional centre that services the surrounding agricultural area and provides recreational, commercial, educational, tourism and health facilities.



**29,200**  
Population



**3,644 km<sup>2</sup>**  
Land mass



**OVER \$1 BILLION**  
Output (equivalent to GDP)



**17%**  
Output value from healthcare



**1,000 +**  
Small & Medium Businesses  
(45% in Agriculture, Construction and Retail)



**56.0**  
Northern Victoria Digital Inclusion Index

Supporting broader flow-on benefits for Victorian communities through access to improved digital services by continued investment and more efficient deployment of telecommunications infrastructure. **\$19 MILLION** potential economic uplift from 5G in the Wangaratta region in the next 5 years (to 2026)

### How digital connectivity supports important outcomes in the region



Provides much needed consistent and high-speed connectivity to **small businesses** currently struggling with basic business operations.



Enhances Wangaratta's role as the centre for remote **healthcare services** for the North Eastern region, through virtual specialist services, real-time monitoring and remote diagnostics.



Increases **digital inclusion** and enhances delivery of **government services**. These shifts will contribute to productivity and income growth throughout the region.



Provides better connectivity for students to stream educational content and state of the art connectivity to drive **innovative learning experiences** for upcoming universities like Country Universities Centre Ovens Murray.



Speed, reliability and use of latest technologies will enable **retailers, manufacturers and distributors** to gather more data, improve automation, increase efficiency, reduce costs and improve customer experience.

Source: PwC Australia Economic Modelling and Analysis

**Case Study:**

## Ballarat

Ballarat is home to a large number of commercial and industrial businesses, government agencies and small to medium enterprises. The region spans the areas of Ballarat, Miners Rest, Invermay, Buninyong, Ross Creek, Haddon and Warrenheip.



**111,000**  
Population



**739 km<sup>2</sup>**  
Land mass



**\$6 BILLION**  
Output (equivalent to GDP)



**16%**  
Output value from healthcare



**12%**  
Jobs from retail trade



**2.4 MILLION +**  
Domestic visitors

Supporting broader flow-on benefits for Victorian communities through access to improved digital services by continued investment and more efficient deployment of telecommunications infrastructure. **\$89 MILLION** potential economic uplift from 5G in the Ballarat region in the next 5 years (to 2026)

### How digital connectivity supports important outcomes in the region



Provides the **infrastructure backbone** for the region to enable innovation hubs and technology centres like Ballarat Technology Park and better connectivity for businesses and residents during peak tourism seasons.



Presents new **growth opportunities** for urban centres like Ballarat, by attracting investment in industry and innovation.



Provides coverage for new **residential developments** to support migration of people from metro areas looking for a change in lifestyle and new business opportunities.



**Provides essential communications** for residents in high bushfire risk areas near the Creswick State Forest.



Enables autonomous and remote operations in the **construction** industry and enhances real-time monitoring and intuitive operations in **manufacturing**.



Ballarat **hospitals** can get increased access to specialists across the country and deploy state-of-the-art patient care solutions.

Source: PwC Australia Economic Modelling and Analysis

## Government initiatives supporting these flow-on benefits

The Victorian Government is committed to improving access to digital technology through fast-tracking better, more reliable mobile and fixed broadband coverage and quality across the state. Victorian Government programs such as the Better Approvals for Business program and the \$550 million Connecting Victoria Program, with a focus on telecommunications infrastructure, will support better digital telecommunications services across Victoria.

## Monitoring Progress

Progress achieved in implementing the Better Approvals for Business reforms will be assessed through a monitoring and reporting framework that is linked to the Victorian Government's broader regulatory reform program.

### For more information visit:

[djpr.vic.gov.au/Better Approvals for Business Program](http://djpr.vic.gov.au/Better Approvals for Business Program)

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