

27 January 2021



**Nathan Fewkes**

Inquiry Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
Department of the House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
R1.121 Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Email: [jscncet@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscncet@aph.gov.au)

Dear Nathan

**RE: Inquiry into the availability and access to enabling communications infrastructure in Australia's external territories**

Communications Alliance welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories' inquiry into and report on the availability and access to enabling communications infrastructure in Australia's external territories, in accordance with the terms of reference referred by the Hon Nola Marino MP, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories.

Communications Alliance supports the Committee's examination of the current communications situation in the Australia's external territories of Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, noting the focus on activities to enhance connectivity and services, and the options and opportunities for improving availability of and access to communications infrastructure.

Communications Alliance is the primary telecommunications industry body in Australia. Its membership is drawn from a wide cross-section of the communications industry, including carriers, carriage and internet service providers, content providers, equipment vendors, IT companies, consultants and business groups. Of relevance to this inquiry, our Satellite Services Working Group (SSWG) represents and advances the interests of the members of Communications Alliance involved in the delivery of satellite-based network facilities and services on a wholesale and/or retail basis. The SSWG's membership includes more than twenty companies working in the space and satellite sector, including satellite operators and service providers, teleport operators, satellite and ground-segment equipment manufacturers, earth-station installers and sectoral experts. The Group is focused in the delivery of satellite-based network facilities and services on a wholesale and/or retail basis.

During the past decade, the satellite industry has advanced considerably in the technology it is capable of, broadband service delivery to both fixed and mobile communications applications, and considerable reductions in the cost of satellite communications. It goes without saying that satellite systems are a natural enabler in the remote environment of external territories and can minimise the disadvantages of distance and lack of inclusion.

A number of our members, including Inmarsat, Intelsat, Omnispace, OneWeb, Optus, Pivotal, SpaceX, SES, Speedcast, Telesat, Telstra and Vocus, have shown a genuine interest in this inquiry and have indicated that there are many opportunities available via new technologies and systems – existent and emerging - that would benefit Australia's external territories, both strategically and commercially. Our members have capabilities in providing modern

communications technologies and infrastructure, and have indicated to Communications Alliance that they will be submitting independent responses to the inquiry, elaborating on these capabilities. Some SSWG members currently provide satellite services to these three external territories, using both domestic and international satellites. For commercially competitive reasons, Communications Alliance will not be providing information on individual members' capabilities in this letter. However, we commend, without hesitation, all of our members mentioned above for your consideration.

The SSWG understands that the Commonwealth Radiocommunication Act and its related and subordinate legislation applies to these three external territories and the licensing of satellite services is the same as on mainland Australia. The SSWG also understands that the Commonwealth Telecommunications Act does not apply to Norfolk Island and Australian Telecommunications legislation has never applied to that territory.

We also understand that although the media release has indicated that the inquiry is focussed on the three Australian external territories of Norfolk Island, Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, there may be an opportunity to provide information that may be relevant to the remaining territories of Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Australian Antarctic Territory, Coral Sea Islands and Heard and McDonald Islands. We have informed our members, who may take the opportunity to provide further information to this effect.

If you have any questions with respect to this submission, please contact Mike Johns at Communications Alliance on 0414 898 841.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Stanton', written in a cursive style.

John Stanton  
**Chief Executive Officer**