



Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

REMOTE CONNECTED AND SAVVY!

Broadband for the Bush Forum



Photo: 2016 Broadband for the Bush Forum © IRCA

The Broadband for the Bush Alliance is hosting its sixth forum *Remote Connected and Savvy!* on 22 and 23 June 2017 at the Esplanade Hotel in Fremantle. The Alliance is a national membership-based organisation dedicated to advancing the digital capacity and capability of those who live and work in remote Australia. The Broadband for the Bush forum is being held in Western Australia this year, recognising the many voices across this vast state and the great need for quality connectivity for all.

Closing the digital divide between the bush and metropolitan areas is no small task. Improving availability and affordability of services, setting minimum service standards and guarantees, and advancing digital literacy remain key priorities to enable rural and remote businesses and communities to participate and prosper in the digital global economy.

“Working towards a digitally connected and empowered remote and rural Australia is the core business of the Broadband for the Bush Alliance. I encourage all Forum delegates to share their experience and put forward options for better digital inclusion, infrastructure and online engagement in the bush” says Apolline Kohen, Chair of the Broadband for the Bush Alliance.

While satellite services have improved, there remain many issues around high costs for limited peak data allowances, slow speeds, latency, and unreliable connections. Challenges and barriers to creating a digitally enabled Australia remain, especially for those living and working outside metropolitan areas. “The provides the opportunity for remote and rural stakeholders to meet together with key decision makers to develop and put forward effective telecommunication policies and innovative solutions” says Ms Kohen.

This year’s forum themes are: Digital Inclusion in the Bush; Regional Innovation; Technology in Action, and Policy and Regulations. These will be discussed through interactive sessions by experts, community practitioners and policy makers. Speakers include: Professor Hugh Bradlow Chief Scientist for Telstra; Delia Richard, Deputy Chair ACCC; Mia Garlick from Facebook; Gavin Williams from nbn, and Tim Kelsey from the Australian Digital Health Agency. The full program is available at <http://broadbandforthebush.com.au/program-2017/>

The Indigenous Focus Day will be hosted the day preceding the Forum, Wednesday 21 June 2017, bringing together over 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians living in remote communities or working in remote-focused organisations. “It is a dedicated day for sharing stories, experiences and ideas about the pathway to digital inclusion for remote and regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Speakers from remote WA and other states will describe innovative broadband and mobile-enabled projects from their communities. Delegates will collectively discuss the impacts of connectivity, both positive and negative, and develop culturally appropriate strategies for digital citizenship for remote Indigenous

people" explains Daniel Featherstone, General Manager of the Indigenous Remote Communication Association, a founding member organisation of the Alliance.

The Broadband for the Bush Alliance acknowledges the significant support and contribution from its sponsors and supporters. Ms Kohen says "Our Principal Sponsor, the WA Department of Commerce, is an important partner in bringing the forum to Fremantle and wants to hear as many WA voices as possible in the forum.

To find out more visit <http://broadbandforthebush.com.au/2017-forum/>

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