

Report snapshot

About this report

The Regional Digital Connectivity program (RDCP) is intended to improve mobile coverage and internet connectivity in regional NSW.

The RDCP includes two funding programs, one for improving mobile coverage and the other for improving internet connectivity. Both programs provide grant funding to commercial telecommunications providers for eligible mobile and internet projects.

This audit assessed whether the Department of Regional NSW (the department) is effectively administering the RDCP to meet program objectives.

Findings

The department's approach to identifying priority areas for RDCP funding was comprehensive and it largely distributed funding in line with these priorities.

The department has not specifically defined the overall objectives of the RDCP. The department has developed business cases that set out each program's respective objectives, but these do not consistently describe the objectives of the RDCP.

The department also has not developed an overarching investment strategy, which would assist it in addressing potentially conflicting priorities.

Deficiencies in project and risk management have contributed to delays in the department's implementation of the program.

The department is not monitoring progress against outcomes, which limits its ability to demonstrate that the program is achieving its intended purpose.

The department did not meet its original mobile coverage performance target but met its internet connectivity target.

Recommendations

To improve the administration of the RDCP, the report recommends that by June 2025, the department should:

1. develop an overarching investment strategy for the RDCP
2. outline the expected timelines for RDCP projects and ensure that these timelines are updated regularly
3. develop and report on RDCP outcome indicators
4. update the RDCP evaluation plan
5. update the expected benefits of the program to reflect changes in the RDCP.

Fast facts

>\$300M

Budget in 2019 to improve mobile coverage in regional areas

36,000

Target for square kilometres of new or improved mobile coverage by June 2023

720

Square kilometres of new and improved mobile coverage delivered by June 2023

>\$100M

Budget in 2019 to improve internet connectivity in regional areas

2,500

Target for number of premises covered by signed contracts for improved internet by June 2023

13,300

Premises covered by signed contracts for improved internet by June 2023