



## Media Release

### **Commpete and other non-dominant providers front parliament supporting co-investment for regional mobile**

*Sydney, 26 May 2023* - Commpete, Australia's leading alliance for fostering competition in digital communications, is today bringing a team including Pivotel and BAI Communications to front the parliamentary inquiry into Co-investment in Multi-Carrier Regional Mobile Infrastructure. The group has re-affirmed its support for co-investment in regional telecommunications, emphasising its potential for positive impact on market competition for retail and wholesale markets in Australia. Australian legal firm Maddocks also appeared at the hearing as external counsel for Commpete.

The parliamentary inquiry, initiated in October at the request of Minister for Communications, Michelle Rowland, aims to examine the current state of Australia's non-co-located mobile infrastructure and explore the feasibility, cost, and benefits of introducing multiple carriers, especially in regional areas.

Commpete chair Michelle Lim said the four entities uniting before the inquiry to represent the alliance demonstrates the significance and urgency of the message. "While Commpete's members may have differing commercial interests, we stand united in advocating for government co-investment in regional telecommunications. Our focus is on fostering competition and choice in expanding coverage in regional areas, and maximising public benefits right from the start," she said.

"The current regulatory settings were put in place in a different era, 25 years ago. They could not and did not anticipate the massive change in the sector over that time. We've seen decisions over coverage become concentrated in a few hands, and these providers can restrict the geographic reach of their networks and hinder roaming and active network sharing, preventing wholesale opportunities for a broader range of market participants.

"Moreover, the government's Mobile Black Spot Program, designed to incentivise smaller providers to invest in underserved areas, is undermined by market monopolisation. If funding programs fail to support a broader national market, and leaves isolated black spots, these providers lack rational incentives to participate. There's never been a better time to break this cycle."

Lim concluded that mandated active network access is required to restore competition and bring access and choice to regional Australia. "At a minimum, the operator of any co-funded infrastructure must provide active network sharing on an open access basis at designated rates which are set by the regulator. This should also include access by Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs).

"Now is the time to make changes to positively favour co-investment and mandate sharing of mobile infrastructure that is fully or partially publicly funded. We need to shape the policy for the future, recognising that public funding will always be an important element, but that co-investment will attract smaller private investors."

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## About Commpete



Commpete is Australia's leading alliance proudly representing non-dominant providers of digital communications for retail and wholesale customers. Commpete provides a united and credible voice on pro-competition policy. Our vision is to encourage an open access regime with equal, timely access to consumers and business. Our goals are to ensure a market framework where strong independent challengers grow to occupy 30% market share and where new entrants can enter and thrive. We believe a diversity of both smaller and larger industry participants will deliver the best flexibility, value and choice for consumers and businesses in Australia.