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**Government Key Issue Brief
Environment and Communication Committee
Briefing titles for Budget Estimates - November 2022
Senator Carol Brown**

Assistant Minister, Senator Carol Brown representing the Minister for Communications at Senate Estimates Opening Statement

Thank you, Chairman. Indeed, it is an honour to be an Assistant Minister in an Albanese Labor Government.

A Government that in its short time in office is working to restore integrity to government, and deliver on its commitments.

Its decisions will be transparent and informed by evidence and consultation, including of course stakeholder and community feedback.

And we want to acknowledge the stakeholders across the communications portfolio for their constructive engagement to date.

An Albanese Labor Government committed to delivering for all Australians. No one held back, no one left behind.

You can see those priorities in our first Budget handed down ~~this~~ ^{last} week. It shows a Government who understands the importance of connectivity towards expanding opportunity and improving quality of life. ^{recently.}

We promised a better National Broadband Network and that is what this Government will deliver – ensuring Australian families, businesses and regional communities have better connectivity options than ever before.

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We are investing \$2.4 billion to expand full-fibre access to a further 1.5 million premises by late 2025, including 660,000 in regional Australia.

This will mean the NBN can deliver speeds of up to one Gigabit per second to nearly 10 million homes and businesses by late 2025.

The investment will create thousands of jobs and provide an estimated \$20 billion boost to GDP by 2030.

In the 21st Century, no Australian child should go without home internet or feel unsafe online.

Our budget will support up to thirty-thousand eligible families without home internet to receive free NBN access for a year. This is a modest measure, but an important one.

And Australian children will be safer online with free digital literacy programs at school.

Better funded national broadcasters

Labor understands a diverse, independent, and sustainable media landscape is vital to a healthy democracy.

This would not be possible without the contribution of our national broadcasters.

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For 90 years, the ABC has been a trusted source of news, information and entertainment, while the SBS reflects and celebrates our diversity.

In my home state of Tasmania, the ABC provides an essential service especially during times of natural disasters.

In the lead-up to the election, the Labor Party committed to five-year funding terms for the national broadcasters.

Why? Because taking funding beyond the three-year election cycle provides greater stability, more time to plan and innovate. It also de-politicises the funding of the ABC.

We have reinstated five-year funding terms from July next year.

We have also restored indexation to the ABC and provided it with an extra \$83.7 million over four years to reinstate the funding that was cut by the former Government from the 2019-2022 triennium.

The Government is also supporting local news, community broadcasting and jobs.

We have already provided a \$15 million lifeline to hundreds of regional newspapers and are taking annual community broadcasting funding to \$20 million; a 25% funding increase.

Bridging the digital divide

Finally, the Government is serious about bridging the digital divide.

Our \$1.1 billion Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia sets out a raft of measures targeted at regional, rural and remote communities.

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The programs within this plan will improve infrastructure, mobile coverage, and provide further support for industry to enhance the resilience of their communications systems during emergency and natural disasters. Because the first priority of any government is to keep its citizens safe. Further, the plan will help enable more farmers to take advantage of productivity enhancing technology, such as connected machinery, in the agricultural sector through the \$30 million On Farm Connectivity Program.

We also recognise that there are particular challenges with mobile coverage on the fringes of our major cities, and so we have set aside an additional \$39.1 million to expand the Peri-Urban Mobile Program, or PUMP. This will help communities on the urban fringe stay connected during natural disasters and emergencies.

In conclusion, families, businesses and communities will be better connected, better informed and empowered thanks to Labor's Federal Budget.

The measures I have outlined deliver on our election commitments.

And they will help to ensure that every Australian, regardless of postcode or circumstance, can take full advantage of the digital economy.

Thank you Chair.

[ENDS]