

REGIONAL & REMOTE · POLICY AND PRACTICE · 2026

Regional Business Phones: Roaming, Satellite and 2027

Three things moved in 2026. The ACCC opened a twelve-month inquiry that could mandate mobile roaming. Satellite texting arrived on ordinary handsets. And a coverage obligation is proposed for 2027.

Two policy tracks and one product, none of which solve this year's problem. The **ACCC launched a mobile services inquiry in August 2026**, running roughly **twelve months**, examining regional coverage and whether to **declare one or more wholesale mobile services**, including **domestic roaming** and a **radio access network service**. It will publish a discussion paper and hold forums in regional and remote Australia, and it explicitly took into account the proposed **Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation in 2027** and the ACMA's upcoming **2 GHz spectrum allocation**. Meanwhile **direct-to-mobile satellite messaging has launched** in Australia on compatible handsets across mainland Australia and Tasmania, but it carries **text and a small set of satellite-optimised apps only. No voice.**

■ The short version

What has changed since 2017	Does it bear on the declaration test?
The 3G shutdown removed a coverage layer that had been carrying rural traffic for two decades	✓ Yes. It materially changed the real-world coverage picture in a way the 2017 analysis could not have anticipated
Major outages and their consequences, including emergency call failures	~ Partly. It sharpens the resilience argument, a second network reachable during a failure, though roaming is designed for absence of coverage, not for outages
Satellite direct-to-mobile now exists commercially	~ Cuts both ways. It is a competing answer to the same problem, and a regulator may reasonably ask whether the market is solving it already
A proposed Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation from 2027	✓ Directly. If an obligation is about to deliver outdoor coverage by another route, the case for declaring roaming is weaker, and the ACCC has said it took this into account
Substantially higher spectrum renewal costs for carriers	✗ Not directly, though it strengthens the industry argument that investment incentives are already under pressure

■ Also worth knowing

Capability	Status
Text messages	✓ Yes, on compatible handsets
A curated set of satellite-optimised apps	✓ Yes, since July 2026
Voice calls	✗ No
General mobile data	✗ No
MMS and ordinary internet messaging apps	✗ No
Indoors, in a vehicle, under trees	✗ Needs to be outdoors with a clear view of the sky
Any handset	✗ Compatible devices only

Read the timeline before you plan around it

Twelve months of inquiry produces a *decision about whether to declare*, not coverage. If a declaration follows, terms and pricing have to be settled, then systems built, then services launched. The realistic distance between today and a regional business seeing a practical difference is measured in years, not months. Anyone selling you a connectivity decision on the basis that roaming is about to be mandated is selling you a decision you should make on today's facts instead.

■ Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ What is the ACCC mobile services inquiry and what could it change?
- ☐ Didn't the ACCC already look at mandatory roaming?
- ☐ Can I make phone calls over satellite direct-to-mobile now?
- ☐ What is the Universal Outdoor Mobile Obligation?
- ☐ My site has almost no mobile signal. Can I still run a business phone system?
- ☐ What should a regional business actually do right now?
- ☐ How do I find out what my coverage really is?

This is the summary. The guide has the detail.

Every point above is worked through in full on our site, with the Australian context, the numbers and the exceptions. If you would rather talk it through, call 1300 881 662 or visit unidenvoice.com/get-started.