

Do you have to walk to the end of your driveway to get one bar on your telephone? Have you spend hours on the phone to your service provider and still don't have a solution? Is your internet slower than a wet week? Do you lose phone signal when you are driving around? There is help at hand in the Regional Tech Hub, a free and independent service to help you with connectivity issues.

Regional Tech Hub manager, Jenny Medway, gave tech insights to a group of around 30 who attended Braidwood Connect at the Braidwood Servicemen's Club on Tuesday 29 August. The evening was hosted by RDA Southern Inland in collaboration with the BAVBC, Braidwood Community Association and QPRC.

Regional Tech Hub is a government initiative run by the National Farmers Federation and provides free and independent advice for businesses, individuals, community groups and councils. Ms Medway said the Hub had helped around 150,000 people since it started up in 2020 and has now had its contract extend to 2026.

It aims to help people and businesses to get connected, to stay connected and to improve connections and use their connections

The Regional Tech Hub website can search to find you the best options for internet and phone services in your area, including those with faster speeds or more economical options. It can also provide tips to improve existing connections and new tech to help you boost reception and connectivity. You can even check that the technology works at your place first before investing in it.

Ms Medway said it was also a resource for troubleshooting and can provide help to escalate a solution for problems you are having with a telco, or advise on how to stay connected during an emergency.

The Hub also gives advice and tips on simple steps you can take to improve reception and your connection at home.

As well as using your connection for business, education and meetings and how to stay safe online.

You can find a lot of the information on the website but you can also book in for a 20 minute one on one conversation with an RTH team member.

Ms Medway also spoke about the planned end of the 3G service in 2024. She said while most phones and other devices use 4G or 5G now, some farm equipment and medical devices still use 3G. She said providers are not able to switch off 3G before they can show they are able to provide and equal or better service on the 4G or 5G networks.

She offered a few other tips to try: wi-fi calling, which uses internet instead of mobile signal to make phone calls could be a solution for some households; the signal bars on phones are no longer reliable and a single bar on a 5G network maybe stronger than 3 bars on a 4G network; and telco companies must supply you with a a landline if you request one. She said if you are refused to contact the Hub for help.

The meeting also heard from NBN Local community engagement manager Nicole Fosters who talked about the NBN local grants program for rural tech business <https://www.nbnco.com.au/campaigns/innovate-with-nbn-grants-program>