

## Untapped & Uncapped



# Belong dials up growth with regional advertising play

**Regional advertising has become BAU for Belong thanks to solid sales and engagement results from its first regionally focused mobile campaign.**

**Aaliah Eggins-Bryson**, Belong, Head of Product and Marketing



Value-based mobile and Internet service provider, Belong, always knew regional audiences would be an important market. And having demonstrated above-average results from its regional-first above-the-line campaign, the telco has made regional part of its marketing BAU.

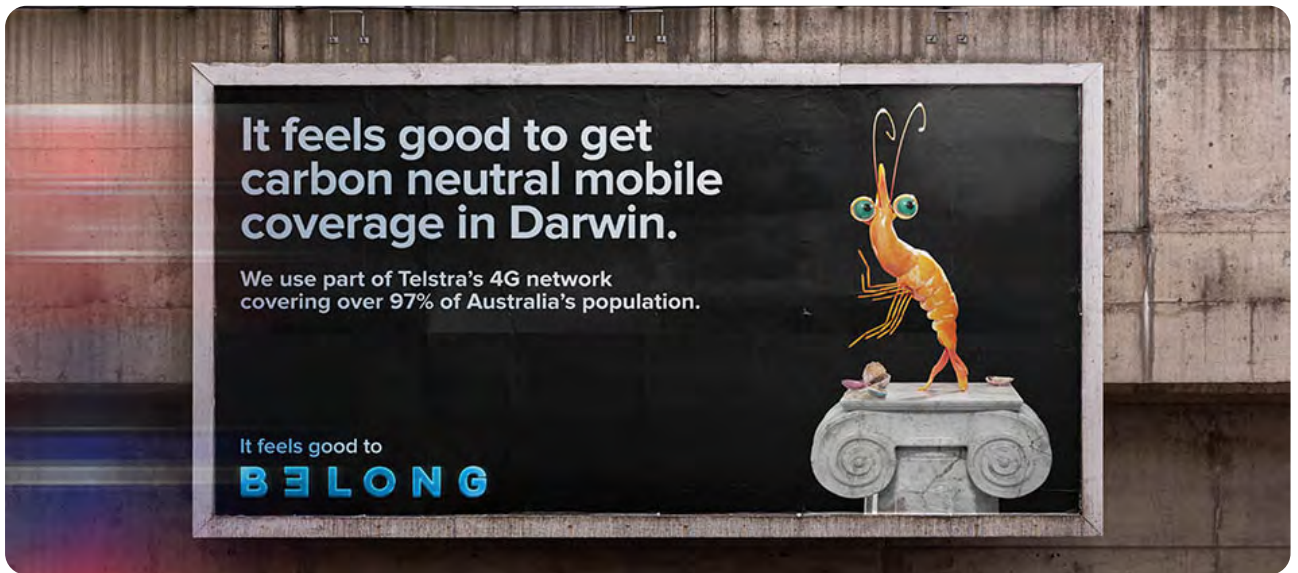
“It’s always surprising to see regional marketing efforts only taking up a small portion of media plans. As a brand, we recognise regional audiences are a large population of people – and therefore consumers,” says Belong Head of Product and Marketing, Aaliah Eggins-Bryson. “From a business perspective, we see a lot of opportunity in terms of growth and capturing new demand in new markets. Everything we have done to date has been really positive and beneficial firstly, to test it out, and then secondly, to roll that into our BAU, communications and targeting strategy.”

### Leaping into regional

It was data and insight that led the Belong marketing team to invest in its first-ever regional advertising campaign in FY21. With 30% of core audiences based in regional areas, it was vital the telco rethink its marketing approach to capture growth in these markets. The brand’s core objective was two-fold: Drive sales; and grow share of voice in regional spaces.

“The first place we went was to data on where Belong has a coverage advantage. Belong uses parts of the Telstra network so we don’t have quite the level of Telstra retail overall. We didn’t want to be selling mobile services to consumers who wouldn’t get the optimal experience,” explains Eggins-Bryson. “After that, it’s market share numbers, brand awareness – all the standard metrics you would pick up and start to look at when assessing a metro campaign, but on a smaller scale.”





Having dipped a toe in first with TV advertising, the Belong regional mobile campaign rolled out to eight markets with a key goal to drive awareness in four specific submarkets: Cairns, Newcastle, Wollongong and Darwin. Belong mapped out selected communities, and types of mediums frequently consumed in these areas. Working with agency partners, the team produced a media plan and creative materials with these audiences in mind.

Execution of Belong's mobile campaign encompassed TV, out-of-home, radio, press, social, BVOD and digital - all planned and bought with a regional lens applied.

"Importantly, regional audiences are doing all of the same things as the metro-dwellers - they consume the same media and need the same things," comments Eggins-Bryson. "We've made it our job to let them know that we're here - that we're a good value and affordable telco they have access to, should they want it."



**It's crucial to rethink regional audiences, and it's crucial for brands to find ways to get their messages to them.**

**Aaliah Eggins-Bryson,**  
Belong, Head of Product and Marketing

There are some distinctions in execution, however. An advantage for marketers in regional cities Eggins-Bryson points to is the size of their CBDs. "These are usually in one central location and you're able to engage in guerilla marketing tactics more effectively," she says.

"One of the activities we did, for example, was coffee cups with Belong's logo and messaging, as well as walking billboards. It was a really exciting and fun piece of work to do overall. You don't get the advantage and ability to do that, nor be as effective, when you're in George Street in Sydney."

Where possible, Belong adjusted and localised messaging based on what drivers are relevant to each region, and to connect with regional audiences in a unique way. A key focus was on 'addressing' a town, such as 'hey Newcastle, Belong has \$29 mobile plans' in out-of-home advertising.

"Overall, we use the same mediums when speaking to both metro and regional audiences. It's more about what we say to them, and how we weight the channels in accordance with consumption habits," Eggins-Bryson continues. "We targeted local areas with ads through channels we knew they consumed, and, in a creative sense, we localised all of our messaging. It was important we carried out a campaign that felt like we were specifically speaking to the community in which we were advertising."

What's also been valuable to know is regional consumers are spending more time watching TV and listening to radio than metro audiences, as well as spending more hours on social media. "Therefore, these spaces are obviously important mediums to be considered in a marketing strategy - it's important to get in front of the right eyeballs and ears," adds Eggins-Bryson.

Another broader influence on Belong's work is taking an audience-first approach when it comes to planning and buying in general. "This extends into how we treat regional audiences," says Eggins-Bryson.

"We have found digital channels perform better with wider targeting and broader audiences for algorithms to do their work, so we have found digital media does give us the opportunity to find the right person, and send them the right message, whether that is regional or metro.

"There's various options when it comes to authentically and appropriately connecting with regional audiences - community and local media means we can get really targeted, which is handy."

### The results and learnings

Overall, five of the eight markets Belong targeted were successful in terms of overall uplift results. As a whole, the campaign exceeded expectations, surpassing an initial target of 5000 new card sales to achieve 6000. A further win was a +20% uplift in brand awareness. Metrics used to gauge campaign success included brand awareness and consideration, sales uplift, brand recall and engagement with the assets.

"We are able to capture sales at a regional level based on location and get all our brand performance tracking down to a market level. While the metrics we used were not dissimilar to national, the way our data works and the way we capture data allows us to pinpoint exact performance down to a market level. It tells us whether we are successful or not," explains Eggins-Bryson.

“For example, out of the initial campaign, Newcastle was the best performing market. Three in the list didn’t quite perform where we expected them to be. This is a great learning and allows us to be more targeted and effective with our media buy overall.”

Such learnings provide broader business benefits, too. In response to the campaign and engagement, Belong is recognising where coverage can be improved, helping prioritise and shape network investment overall.

It’s for these all reasons Eggins-Bryson sees regional campaign efforts contributing “enormous” return on investment. “It’s not just sales or retention or revenue numbers overall, but the learnings you get from these different markets,” she says.

“In addition to that, many big corporates have flexible work policies and staff are increasingly working in these areas. That’s a new channel of really rich insight you can tap from a different user base to inform your overall marketing strategy. And from a personal perspective, as someone who grew up in Newcastle, it’s awesome when someone is going on holiday, or your parents are calling you up noting advertising for the company you work at is showing up locally.

“I think overall the return on investment is enormous and the opportunity for growth is huge because these have been underinvested in markets.”



**“It’s always surprising to see regional marketing efforts only taking up a small portion of media plans. As a brand, we recognise regional audiences are a large population of people – and therefore consumers,**

**Aaliah Eggins-Bryson,**  
Belong, Head of Product and Marketing

## Making regional BAU

The success of Belong’s regional mobile campaign acted as a catalyst for rolling through a regional approach into BAU marketing, targeting and strategy overall.

“Every time we launch a campaign or are thinking about targeting media buys, the regional markets where Belong has previously performed always make the list,” says Eggins-Bryson. “Executionally, it is a bit trickier than just focusing on Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. But we have amazing agency partners, particularly our media partner, OMD, who is able to work through all of that.”

Today, 30% of Belong’s mobile base is in regional areas and the split on media spend matches it. Eggins-Bryson spies an opportunity to advance messaging targeting as the brand’s next step. “The original brief had some different options around point-to-point coverage, a specific example to Belong,” she says.

Work to date also reaffirmed regional as an audience Belong should always be addressing.

“Regional audiences are hugely important, and they appreciate advertising specifically tailored to them that considers their needs,” concludes Eggins-Bryson.

“A lot of brands and marketers don’t think about regional audiences correctly. They assume they’re a small number of people or imagine a very specific person or demographic in a very rural or remote area. The truth is, regional audiences are a diverse mix of people – in age, income, ethnicity, interests and more. You’ll also find plenty of overlap with metro audiences in terms of values, opinions and habits.

“It’s crucial to rethink regional audiences, and it’s crucial for brands to find ways to get their messages to them.”