

BUSINESS MESSAGING

RCS vs SMS in Australia 2026: Should You Switch Yet?

RCS is 2026's headline messaging upgrade, verified branded senders, logos, buttons and rich cards. But in Australia the carriers haven't switched on iPhone RCS yet, so SMS is still the only way to reach every mobile in the country.

RCS (Rich Communication Services) is the big global messaging story of 2026. Apple added it in iOS 18, so Android and iPhone can finally exchange rich messages, and RCS now reaches up to **~85% of smartphones** in major markets. Verified RCS “for Business” senders show a **brand logo, name and trust badge**, and support carousels, buttons and chatbot flows. **The catch: in Australia, carrier support is still limited**, iPhone RCS is not yet enabled by Telstra, Optus or Vodafone. That means **SMS remains the only way to reach every Australian mobile number**. The honest 2026 advice: register your SMS Sender ID with ACMA now, keep using SMS, and watch RCS closely, but don't switch yet in Australia.

■ The short version

Factor	SMS	RCS
Branded sender (logo + name + trust badge)	~ Registered Sender ID only	✓ Full verified branding
Rich media (images, carousels)	✗ Text only	✓ Yes
Buttons & chatbot flows	✗ No	✓ Yes
Read receipts & typing indicators	✗ No	✓ Yes
Works without mobile data / Wi-Fi	✓ Works on any signal	✗ Needs data connection
Reaches basic and older handsets	✓ Every mobile	✗ Smartphones only

■ Key points

- Get your business messaging sorted for 2026

Read this table the right way

RCS is genuinely the richer, more capable channel. The columns below aren't arguing otherwise. What they show is that a feature list and real-world deliverability in Australia are two separate things, and for now, deliverability is the row that decides your business messaging.

■ Questions the full guide answers

- ☐ What is RCS messaging?
- ☐ Can I send RCS messages to iPhones in Australia?
- ☐ Is RCS replacing SMS in Australia in 2026?
- ☐ Why does SMS still reach more Australians than RCS?
- ☐ What is the SMS Sender ID Register and when did it start?
- ☐ Should my business switch from SMS to RCS now?

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 663 222** or visit vocphone.com/about/contact-us.