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## THE REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDEPENDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

In response to the current Regional Telecommunications Independent Review, I would like to put forward the following submission as an individual.

I reside in Beaufort, regional Victoria by choice, 170km from Melbourne CBD and 2km south of the township of Beaufort. I have access to CBD and regional facilities; as such I do not consider myself as remote. My submission is put forward in response to the government statement made on 7 April 2009, citing *commitment to building a ubiquitous national network, providing access to high-speed broadband for every home, school and business in Australia.*

Of the five identified areas captured as part of the review, my response is to the following:

**THE DIGITAL ECONOMY** – defined in the review paper as *the ability to interact online in real-time, using the internet, is encouraging many innovative new communication models and applications.*

***Question 6. What are the main barriers to regional communities increasing their use of information and communications technologies and do you have any ideas for ways in which regional communities could progressively overcome these barriers?***

Regional communities are restricted in their use of public services out of business hours. In Beaufort internet use is available through the Library's resource centre during business hours, however there is no public service after 5pm weekdays or weekends.

An extended-hours internet hub, or out of hours sign-in library service needs to be investigated.

### **Case Study**

I am employed full time and also take on consulting work in the environmental area, requiring site visits, research and access to data and mapping sites. A high level of frustration is experienced in waiting for internet access on the weekend 9-5pm when daylight hour internet use conflicts with the need for on-ground site visits. I have been unable to resolve this conflict (see consumer issues at Case Study 2)

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TERRESTRIAL AND SATELLITE MOBILE PHONE SECTOR & Consumer issues**

***Question 16. Are there any significant consumer issues specific to rural and remote communities that you consider are not being addressed?***

The government has given a commitment to prioritise (97%) *of the regional rollout of the NBN to ensure non-metropolitan communities are amongst the first beneficiaries of reliable high-speed broadband.*

Better access to broadband will not be achieved without improved provider commitment to infrastructure upgrade.

### **Case Study 2**

Building a new dwelling I applied to Telstra, charged with responsibility for phone infrastructure, to install a landline. I subsequently dug the trench from the dwelling to the property boundary, in readiness for connection. 12 months later I had no landline connection. In response to my queries with Telstra, lack of service was of high concern, only reaching a satisfactory level of service when the Telecommunications Act responsibility was mentioned and 'my case' was handed over to a specialised team. A satellite phone was organised at a landline rental until a landline connection was organised 3 months later. The reason given by a technician installing cable 'there is lack of infrastructure at the Beaufort exchange'. This deplorable example needs to be explored further by the Ombudsman

#### Broadband connection

My purpose in landline connection was to receive broadband, notably faster than wireless. This has proved unsuccessful to date. *Lack of laying ADSL cable from the roadside to my dwelling by Telstra* was stated by provider Westnet as the reason for not being able to receive broadband reception.

Wireless use has also proved unsuccessful. I am in a treed area with reception of a bar reading of two bars out of five – this is not sufficient to download data, maps and graphics used in my consulting. Adding an internal aerial, advocated by a Telstra supplier (Ararat) similar to vehicle communication aerial has not improved my reception or my situation.

My out of hours options are:

- to travel with my laptop until a strengthened signal is received, park under a streetlight and undertake work at a wireless strength of 3 bars in the Beaufort township area.
- to extend my weekday work hours to include broadband access before or after hours

My current situation; the wireless modem remains unused, and I have limited access to broadband. In response to the statement review statement that *building fibre in regional areas is a priority, a government commitment and review outcome must ensure equity of access through supply guarantee for what is now viewed as basic infrastructure.*

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee

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