

# The Council of The Shire of Bourke

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Please address all communications to the General Manager

Monday, October 03, 2011

## Regional and Indigenous Communications Branch

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy  
GPO Box 2154  
Canberra ACT 2601

### Re: Regional Telecommunications Independent Review

Dear Luke,

Thank you for your recent visit to Bourke and giving us the opportunity to talk with your committee in regards to Regional Telecommunications.

The key issues for those in the Western areas remain the same with little progress over the past several years. In summary and as discussed these include:

**Lack of adequate mobile phone coverage:** Mobile phone coverage in Western New South Wales remains limited to the major towns. There is little or no coverage along the highways and in many of the smaller villages. Wanaaring for example is a town with almost 200 residents living nearby with no coverage. There remains limited coverage along the Kidman Way between Cobar and Barringun (almost 300Km) and limited coverage on the road from Nyngan to Bourke (200Km).

**Digital Television and Radio:** Like much of the latest technology that has been rolled out, those in the Western areas will be the last to receive the benefit. Digital Television is not due in many parts of the west until the end of 2013. This is more than 10 years after those in the cities will have enjoyed the benefits.

**Internet speeds and reliability:** As many people in the west live away from the main Telstra node the reliability and speeds of internet connections are not guaranteed. Those in the bush areas are paying above average prices due to reduced competition and fewer options.

**National Broadband Network:** While many people in this region can see the benefits of the network there is no detail on how it will be rolled out and to whom. As with previous technology upgrades their remains a fair degree of skepticism that this will be of real benefit in the short term or to everybody.

**Training and advocacy:** this was also covered during the discussion. Those present felt that there should be more training available to those in the western areas in regards to the benefits of all communications technology. This was not felt to be all the responsibility of the communications retailers. There was a strong point made that the communications plans are not user friendly and can trap people when other options may suit better.

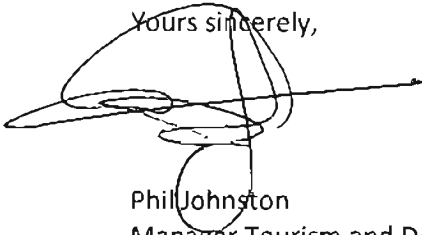
**Government agencies utilizing technology:** an interesting point that was made at the forum is that there seems to be an underutilization of the existing technology. That is Government agencies are not using the

existing capabilities in the areas of medicine or education (and I am sure there are others). More needs to be done in this area, particularly as speeds improve.

Common services throughout all communities: another strong point was made to ensure the same levels of service are available in an equal way to all that live in Australia. It is generally felt that those living in more remote or indigenous communities do not have the same level (or anywhere near) of services available as those in other regions of Australia.

This is a short summary of the main points discussed at the forum. Please feel free to call if any clarification is needed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Phil Johnston', written over a horizontal line. The signature is somewhat stylized and overlaps the line.

Phil Johnston  
Manager Tourism and Development