

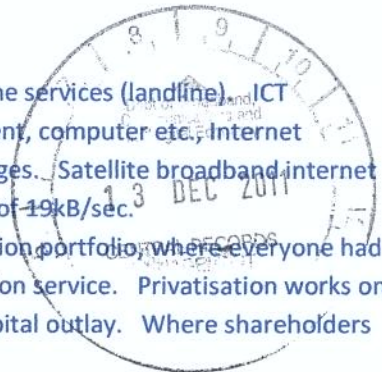
2011-2012 Regional Telecommunications Review Secretariat,
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
GPO Box 2154
Canberra ACT 2601

SUBMISSION RE TELECOMMUNICATIONS

My submission is in the form of answers to questions raised in the Regional Telecommunications Review – Issues Paper 2011-12.

Question (1 – 21) answers.

1. We are only able to access basic communication telephone services (landline). ICT involvement required a large cash investment in equipment, computer etc, internet provider and plan with potential for excessive usage charges. Satellite broadband internet was arranged via Government as landline is only capable of 19kB/sec.
2. Bring back the Government owned essential communication portfolio where everyone had a chance of a reasonably and reliably priced communication service. Privatisation works on numbers – insufficient numbers service not viable for capital outlay. Where shareholders involved, return on investment required.
3. We have no confidence in Internet Banking because of risk of identity theft which is becoming more prevalent. Transactions at the bank involve a fee. Customers are forced to use the ATM and pay a fee for standing outside in exposed weather conditions and huddle over unit so no one can see your PIN after a visual check of machine for a rogue hidden camera, while bank staff are in air-conditioned comfort. Phone banking is out also involving lengthy waits and difficulty in proving identity. Also online Government Services cost me time and money trying to wade through masses of information and links to obtain the answer to often just a simple question which could be quickly answered by a staff member via telephone, after waiting lengthy periods yet again. Much internet information is so involved it requires printing to enable us to digest its contents or to be available for quick reference. So much for the paperless society. Transactions via the net involving card payments leave people open to fraud and we do not use them.
4. We rarely avail ourselves of Government services on line. It costs us time and money and can often only be used after a long and tiring working day on the farm. It might be convenient for Government Depts. but is too time consuming for many people.
5. We would like to see more mobile phone towers built to enable reception for everybody not just urban people and do not know what else would be available to us to reduce the unnecessary costs of a satellite phone for business and emergency uses (see 15)
6. Costings of new technology – plans- ongoing usage charges. What charges will be involved in connection to customers' premises of the NBN system and what will be the ongoing costs? Increasing electricity pricing – in my case the modem uses 80W/hr – therefore 12.5 hrs = 1 unit- 24 hrs. uses approx.. 2 units of electricity, so approx.. 60c daily just to run the modem.
7. On line education is useful in rural areas as on site training involves time, fuel, meals and sometimes accommodation as there is no public transport.

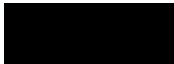


8. We have had no personal experience of on-line training.
9. They will require education and training to fully partake in courses.
10. Education.
11. Much basic education will be required to give them the confidence to undertake further courses.
12. Further education.
13. We have been able to source information but the fact remains that this is regarded by Telstra as a satellite phone area only as there is no mobile phone coverage for at least 25 km. 75% of Australian landmass is not covered – that should tell you something about privatisation of telecommunication in rural areas.
14. Unaware of any new technology which could improve situation except more mobile towers.
15. Satellite phone service (Pivotel) originally Globalstar is absolutely useless. Our sat. phone which was also a combination of CDMA was purchased in 1/6/2004. The CDMA service was discontinued 28/4/2008 – we received no deduction on our plan for lack of CDMA use on phone. The sat. phone is usually only used in emergencies, such as when the landline has failed, but has also been used to call vets, stock & station agents and livestock transporters. We have paid over \$3000 so far for the \$35 monthly plan and we have been advised that there are not enough satellites remaining to provide a reliable continuous service. We were recently advised that to ensure that a satellite is in the correct position we must get on their web site and proceed through many links till call times appear (when satellite becomes available for use). Take note of times and down times each week – this has to be done weekly as times vary. Example call times for 1/12/11 – between 12.49pm and 1.15pm (26 mins) 1.15pm and 1.23pm (8 mins. Down time) 1.23pm and 1.43 pm(20 mins) 1.43pm and 2.05 pm(22min. down time and 2.05 pm and 2.38 pm (33 mins) This is hardly helpful in an isolated paddock or road and an ambulance or other emergency services are urgently needed. Just to call Telstra on the sat. phone to report failure of the landline is a nightmare as by the time we have listened to Telstra's spiel, pushed various buttons, relayed message by UHF handheld radio to wife in house so she can push buttons on dead landline phone, the satellite has disappeared over the horizon and contact is lost with operator. This standard of service is unacceptable. No urban person has to accept such a substandard service.
16. Unreliable landlines. No mobile coverage for long distances. Satellite phone areas when sat. phones are so unreliable. Unreliable electricity supplies which are not only necessary for general use, but also to power computers and modems.
17. No there is very little such information available unless the people have the time and ability to actually search through a maze of web sites or published material in rural newspapers, seniors magazines etc.
18. Communication with isolated rural/regional could be made by phone messages, mail or television ads. about changes and how they will affect the individual and where to get information and guidance.
19. We are very wary of much of the modern technology such as the Smart phone. Already there is too much risk of too much exposure of private information such as the ready availability of ABN numbers and other personal information which we feel leaves people open to identity theft and other forms of fraud

20. First of all services need to be available. Secondly users need to be advised of the risks involved with their use. Perhaps a booklet could be made available at the Office of Fair Trading offices so that the public can avail themselves of the relevant information.
21. Costings are a concern. Purchase of relevant equipment, duration of contracts, cost of monthly plans for unreliable services and the ever increasing cost of electricity to run computers, modems etc.
22. Finally I wish to re-iterate my concern about the lack of privacy and risk of identity theft and fraud because of ready availability of ABNs and other sensitive details. Even submissions such as this are publicly available on the net. The ability to have name and contact details withheld afford some protection. There could even be repercussions from other Government Depts. if anyone prints an opposing view of certain Government policies.



Yarrabin NSW 2850



(name and contact details to be withheld)

7/12/11

Addendum Item 16

Telstra line faults are only serviced to pillar box. After this point a contractor is required to be called to fault find and repair. Another charge including travelling time? Another penalty for rural customers. We are unable to have a caller ID readout another thing town people take for granted.