



2011-2012 Regional Telecommunications  
Review Secretariat,  
Department of Broadband, Communication  
and the Digital Economy,  
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This submission is presented on behalf of Business Kerang, the peak body representing retailers and the trades and production sectors at Kerang, which is the largest urban serving centre within the Shire of Gannawarra in north-western Victoria.

Business Kerang notes the Minister's request for the review committee to have particular regard for the opportunities that the National Broadband Network creates for the emerging digital economy and wish to address the following points in this regard.

In each of the sectors listed below, there are deficiencies caused by telecommunication "black spots" for mobile telecommunications.

Early provision of National Broadband Network services would alleviate the barriers to safe and efficient communication across our shire and beyond.

The absence of mobile telephony signals in some rural sections of our district – particularly in forest areas adjacent to the Murray River the lesser populated eastern Mallee region – is also accompanied slow speed of

#### **Health and education outcomes**

Kerang and neighbouring Cohuna both have district hospitals providing acute, medical and surgical, midwifery and aged care facilities.

Both are linked to a multi-hospital regional information technology network that not only provides patient record, accounting and data processing technology, but have the increasing need to have reliable telecommunication services for transmission of radiology images and for teleconference connections to medical specialists, especially in emergency situations.

Ambulance paramedics also experience radio and telephone coverage difficulties in some parts of the district.

Rural students could be deemed to be already disadvantaged, yet it is a plausible argument that denying them access to the latest, rapid broadband facilities will be an impediment to, not only their current education, but also the capacity to gain the knowledge needed for the broadening range of careers requiring such skills.

### **Growth in local economies**

Gannawarra Shire Council has a proactive approach to enticing industrial and commercial business growth across the shire, yet, like many rural municipalities, can be hamstrung by slow and unreliable telecommunications, lack of natural gas and transportation issues.

Business Kerang firmly believes that all Australian citizens, whether in the midst of a capital city or residing in outback, are entitled to access to essential infrastructure services.

Immediate access to telecommunication facilities is also a matter of safety.

The expansion of affordable satellite transmissions may overcome many of these issues.

### **Government services**

The adequacy of services provided by the Federal, State and local governments is another area where rural people should not be disadvantaged.

We ask that you take these matters into account during your deliberation,

Yours sincerely,

Steve Holdstock,  
Chairman,  
On behalf of Business Kerang.