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To whom it may concern

Yaraka is a small community of approximately 15 people, with another 80 rural residents on surrounding properties.

Presently our district receives fixed phone services via Telstra's Next G Wireless link or High Capacity Radio Concentrator with microwave backhaul and Broadband internet is via Satellite or Telstra NGWL.

A Telstra tower extending approximately 60 feet is situated on Mt Slowcombe, 3 km from Yaraka and mains electricity was connected to the top of this mountain 6 years ago, with upgrades to this tower in mind. A UHF radio tower also operates from the top of Mt Slowcombe and a repeater channel can reach up to 100 km away.

Since the installation of Next G in the neighbouring Isisford rural area, several years ago, mobile phone coverage has expanded around Yaraka, although still unreliable. Next G network is popular in this neighbouring district and current indications are that present High Capacity Radio Concentrator customers would opt for a change to Next G wireless as this would ensure mobile coverage and competitive internet options. As this district isn't on the NBN agenda, Next G would give a more reliable service than Satellite, which is our alternative.

With regard to the new universal service framework associated with the NBN environment, our community is concerned that access to standard telephone service will be degraded. If the present microwave system were to be replaced with Satellite it could mean a phone service fraught with voice delay and interruption from inclement weather.

The broadband internet connection under the proposed NBN rollout is also a concern. Presently consumers in this district, who are fortunate enough to access wireless broadband services via NGWL pay \$69 for 12GB of data and excellent up and download speeds, however those restricted to ABG Satellite broadband service pay \$69 for 1 GB and lose the ability to bundle their telecommunications services for a better aggregated cost.

This town's isolation, coupled with people working alone in risky occupations, means that mobile phone coverage and more affordable internet would greatly enhance lifestyle and business operations.

The Royal Flying Doctor is relied on for medical services in Yaraka and dependable phones/mobiles/internet is imperative in a medical emergency. Occassions have arisen when the landline service has failed and a medical evacuation has been orchestrated using a mobile phone from the top of a vehicle. The doctor also has expressed the need to access patient and medical information via the internet which presently is unavailable in the clinic location.

As schooling is delivered via Distance Education, a suitable internet/phone service is also instrumental for the conduct of this form of Education.

Virtual schooling is an integral component of distance education and Satellite internet does not provide a reliable service.

Aside from permanent residents in this area, travellers depend on telecommunication services while in these relatively isolated parts of the outback.

Yaraka is on route to Birdsville and is now featured on a Longreach Regional council brochure advertising 3 different "Self Drive" tours in the central west. Untapped tourism prospects exist in this uniquely outback, scenic part of the west. Satellite phones are not 'user friendly' and are expensive, so due to lack of mobile service, tourists feel insecure, hence their reluctance to travel.

Our community, in conjunction with the Longreach Regional Council, has written several times to Telstra Country Wide over the past 3 years, requesting an upgrade to the tower situated at Mt Slowcombe, but to no avail. We are told that extention of Next G mobile coverage to Mt Slowcombe is not commercially viable as the improved technology would cost \$300,000.

We continue to campaign for an equitable telecommunication service and will also look for funding opportunities that will enable the required upgrade.

On behalf of the Yaraka Sports & Progress Association, I thank the RTRIC for this opportunity to submit our Telecommunications needs to your review and we look forward to hearing an outcome.

Yours sincerely,
Susan Glasson, President Yaraka Sports & Progress Association