

Submission to the 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review

From landholders in the Mimosa, Winchendon Vale, Rannock and Betric areas of New South Wales

Introduction

In July 2011 30 landholders in the above localities held a combined meeting to discuss the very poor mobile phone service we receive. Most of those who attended had none or very little reception. The area in question is about 30 kilometres by 30 kilometres equating to 900 square kilometres and is less than 100 kilometres from Wagga Wagga, NSW's largest inland city.

At the meeting those present elected a small committee to take action to try to get a better service.

The sentiments of the meeting are summed up in the following extracts from a letter the committee sent to our local Federal Member for Riverina the Hon. Michael McCormack

“We live in an era where communication is instant and 90% of the population have this access making them contactable 24/7. Our ability to access vital emergency services, fire, ambulance and police, is greatly impaired and the outcome of an emergency can be influenced by lack of service

Communication via the net, a growing need for farming businesses, is restricted to landline or satellite which limits downloading of information. Internet access via wireless is mostly unavailable. We are regularly forced to make calls to mobiles using our landline service which imposes a greater call charge, not to mention the added inconvenience.

We are dependent on the surrounding small towns such as Temora, Coolamon, Marrar, Aria Park for our services and as landholders we provide income to those towns through our purchases. The area of concern adjoins the Temora Junee Wagga Road (Canola Way), the Temora Coolamon Road and the Coolamon Aria Park Road, these are all major traffic routes through the Riverina. The mobile service along these routes at present, especially Temora to Wagga is very limited.”

Relevant Review issues

We have read your “issues paper” but find it difficult to address many of the questions as we have not been able to experience the benefits of telecommunication services available to our capital city or even regional city “cousins”.

Suffice to say our family members, farming contractors and other people who live elsewhere are amazed at what we put up with when they come home to visit!

The following are specific points we would like to make in addition to the above comments.

1. Most of our landholders are farmers and our industry has huge potential to use modern telecommunications facilities if they were available. The broadband roll out is very unlikely to reach us so we will be dependent on mobile phones and or satellite. Improving these services to areas like ours has to be the No1 priority of your review.

2. We believe your review should acknowledge there are still significant “black hole” areas where communities cannot enjoy, or even understand, the potential benefits of internet and mobile phone service with the capacity-speed etc comparable to that available in the capital cities.

3. The farming industries and those who work in them have been rapid adopters of new telecommunications services where available and will be more and more reliant on them in the future.

4. Satellite phones are not well understood but will never be a substitute for top quality mobile phone coverage..

Conclusion

We hope you will include these points in your review and support the need for ALL Australians to enjoy the full benefits of modern telecommunications.

Yours faithfully,
The working committee

Phillip Reid
Ralph Billing
Ian Thompson
Garry Moncrieff
Bob McCormack

Contact details: Bob McCormack, [REDACTED] Old Junee NSW 2652
[REDACTED]