

From: Jane Lincoln [REDACTED]
To: secretariat@rtirc.gov.au
Sent: Sat 26/11/2011 4:58 PM
Subject: Regional Telecommunication Issues - Submission

Attn: Ms Rosemary Sinclair

Four and a half years ago my husband and I sold our property in Caboolture, north of Brisbane and moved to a 5 acre property in the town of Widgee, Queensland - population at the time of just over 800. The town of Widgee is located 22 kilometres south west of Gympie, population circa 43,000.

Imagine our surprise to find there was no television, radio, mobile or internet signals available to us with all Telcos advising that the area was not commercially viable. We applied and were granted Government funding for satellite Internet which, at best, is extremely slow even though we pay top dollar for the fastest speed available. We then paid \$1400 for a satellite dish so we could watch television or listen to the radio through the Imparja network (complete with ads relating only to Alice Springs & Mt Isa with no local content whatsoever). We have since paid another \$279 for a Vast digital receiver so that we are ready for the digital changeover - this was the cheapest option available to those of us with satellite television. We now have access to all the channels available.

With the advent of the NBN we assumed we would be able to access this service once it was up and running. We have since been advised that we will not be receiving this service as our town is too small. I had assumed, perhaps in my naivety, that the NBN was going to be accessible to rural communities.

Optus recently advised they were installing a number of towers in our district but unfortunately, when I enquired if we would be included in their coverage, I was advised in the negative. I do advise however that if I stand on one leg and lean out over the back verandah whilst holding on for dear life, I can just manage to get 1-2 bars of coverage which in an emergency would be enough to send a text (maybe.... depending on the weather, battery power, which way the wind is blowing etc etc etc)

I was recently employed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as a Supervisor for the 2011 Census and the area under my supervision extended through Widgee, the towns of Kilkivan and Goomeri including many small rural communities. One of the promotions for the Census was on-line completion instead of the personal collection of past Census'. The level of angst from homeowners in these areas when advised of this new procedure was high, considering most of them had no access whatsoever to the Internet or mobiles. The Collectors I employed were faced with being unable to use their mobiles to ask for assistance in the case of breakdowns, dangerous situations etc and were forced to complete their duties in daylight hours only for this reason. A number of the female Collectors were accompanied by husbands/partners for safety reasons as they had no access to the mobile network.

I realise that living in a rural community has its' problems particularly with regard to medical, transport and telecommunications but I feel we are being seriously let down when

we are unable to use a mobile phone. I listened with amusement when our Premier Anna Bligh was extolling the virtues of emergency text messaging in the case of flooding, fires etc so everyone is aware of problems - who is going to advise those of us who do not have access to this essential service?

I would dearly appreciate being extended the same telecommunication privileges as our city cousins and will follow the progress of this review.

Regards,
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