

Submission.

on behalf of Mingoola Progress Association Inc.

Mingoola is located on the upper border rivers west of Tenterfield NSW.

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the review. The floods of January 2011 highlighted the importance of, and short comings, in the telecommunications sector. All river gauging stations are connected through the telephone systems. They are currently being transferred to the mobile network as this is regarded as the most reliable. However during the recent floods the local mobile network failed due to the lack of backup power supply to exchanges and transmitters. Attempts to communicate with Telstra were unsatisfactory as staff in the off shore call centre had no understanding of the emergency. When a technician did come to the exchange he was unable to address the problem without a job number.

The loss of the gauging stations had a disastrous effect on the downstream communities who had no way of knowing the extent of the water coming. It also severely compromised the bureau of meteorology's flood warning system. The loss of communication had a devastating effect on people's morale and psychological wellbeing. Those people who were isolated all stated that they felt okay until the loss of communications. This loss of communication also put severe strain on relatives outside the flood area as they were unable to contact family members.

Although we are situated within 60km of town, a large part of the river valley, with a relatively large population, has no or very poor mobile cover. This also limits the opportunity for new river gauging stations. It is unacceptable in a time when the federal government is spending a large amount of money on an NBN, that many people do not have even basic communications.

- As mobile phone is now the major form of communication, the reliability is critical.
- Provision must be made for auxiliary power supply at remote facilities.
- There must be a local contact number for emergencies.
- As communications are critical, Telstra should have a seat on all Local Emergency Management Committees.
- Technicians must be able to use their initiative in times of emergency.
- The number of people with poor or no mobile service is unacceptable when the government is rolling out a very expensive NBN.
- Governments should subsidise more mobile towers or fully subsidise satellite phones where services are inadequate.

Submission made by Bob South,

on behalf of the Mingoola Progress Association Inc.