

Submission to 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review Lack of Mobile Phone Service Ungarra and District, SA

Submission written by Mrs Christine Radford on behalf of
the Ungarra (and Districts) Progress Association.

The Ungarra District, Eyre Peninsula, South Australia, has been battling to have a mobile phone signal in the area even though in a straight line, the district is just 12kms from the highway, where a full signal can be obtained.

Letters have been written to the CEO of Telstra, and to the Telstra Country-Wide Manager in Port Lincoln to try and rectify this problem to no avail. A public meeting was held and attended by the Telstra Country-Wide Manager from Port Lincoln, a State and a Federal politician. The best Telstra can do is to tell us to put an aerial on our roofs. This works fine in town but is NOT a mobile phone, does NOT help the farmers who need to access apps for grain pricing, delivery, etc. NOR the many people who travel through this area.

On Tuesday 22 June 2010, our local newspaper, the Port Lincoln Times, lauded Telstra Country-Wide in an editorial claiming that "Telstra Country-Wide has ... made mobile and wireless technology available to 99 percent of the Australian population."

We ask the question how and why is it that we here in Ungarra are in the 1 percent without this coverage, considering we are only 18 kilometres (by bitumen road) and 12 kilometres in a straight line from the Lincoln Highway where full coverage is available? Why has this vibrant rural community been so disregarded and dismissed?

Ungarra has an innovative and very successful school with steadily growing pupil numbers; has the local silos serviced by train and is at the crossroads of the many roads leading to all parts of the Eyre Peninsula. This area is a vital grain, sheep and horse breeding area and its contribution to State and Federal funds is in excess of \$6M per annum. The best advice that Telstra can offer is to connect our mobile phone to a roof mounted aerial; not good enough, certainly not "mobile" and most definitely not "everywhere we need it".

Graham Pugsley, local farmer: "There are many farmers who operate in this black spot phone signal area who feel constantly frustrated and disadvantaged by not having access to internet technology that would enhance their business operations. We are being denied access to work with technology in the marketplace that uses 2cm precision agriculture, which relies on GPS (Global Positioning Systems) via the mobile phone. During peak work times of harvest and seeding programs we spend endless hours in tractors, headers and trucks where we would love to be able to manage marketing, order parts, get agronomic advice on fertilizers and chemicals, send and receive email, text and phonecalls, that are all critical to managing our business competitively and efficiently. Without reliable mobile phone coverage our operations are being jeopardized. As you can appreciate time is critical in these peak times, and farmers need all this technology to remain viable in a competitive marketplace."

There is growing anger in this area at the perceived dismissal of our need for mobile phone and wireless coverage and our pleas for help simply seem to fall on deaf ears. Surely there is a duty of care with provision of this service, particularly in times of catastrophic events such as fire. Our memories here are still raw from the loss of life and property during the January 2005 bushfire on the Eyre Peninsula. It further angers residents from Ungarra and districts that Telstra can spend thousands of dollars offering training on using the internet in Tumbly Bay just 20 minutes away by road, and offering fast broadband to Coffin Bay, but we can't even access basic mobile coverage.

We are now in talks with Optus who are offering us some hope that this situation can be rectified.

Attached are press clippings, copies of Letters to the Editor concerning this issue and relevant pages from the Ungarra Progress Association Newsletter; as well the relevant pages from a comprehensive district survey carried out by Ms Karen Baines this year.

Submission to 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review - Mobile Phone Coverage Ungarra District SA

The Editorial in the Port Lincoln Times, Tuesday 22 June 2010, lauded Telstra Countrywide. In that Editorial it was stated that "Telstra Countrywide has ... made mobile and wireless technology available to 99 percent of the Australian population." How is it then that the good residents of Ungarra are in the 1 percent of the population without mobile phone or wireless access? Given that we are only 18 kilometres from the Lincoln Highway where the signal is accessible, and given the monetary input from this area into State and Federal coffers, in this day and age, this is unforgiveable.

Letter to the Editor Port Lincoln Times
Published. Written by Chris Radford, Ungarra

Tuesday 25 June 2011



A section of the crowd attending a public meeting held 12 April 2011 regarding the lack of mobile phone coverage in the Ungarra district.



Submission to 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review - Mobile Phone Coverage Ungarra District SA

Tues. 19 April 2011



COFFIN BAY BROADBAND: Telstra Country Wide Area South Australia North and West general manager John Tonkin.

Fast internet for Coffin Bay

COFFIN Bay will soon have access to high-speed ADSL broadband.

Telstra Country Wide Area South Australia North and West general manager John Tonkin said an upgrade to Telstra's fixed broadband network would give Coffin Bay residents the option to connect to fixed broadband, in line with other communities like Port Lincoln, Cummins and

Tumby Bay.

"For the first time, families and businesses in Coffin Bay will get access to fixed broadband, providing new opportunities for health, education, productivity improvements and entertainment," he said.

ADSL is a high-speed broadband internet service which allows phone and fax line use while on the internet.

Port Lincoln Times

14 April 2011 - Port Lincoln Times

Can't beat them join them

Last Tuesday (April 12) our community asked why we are not in the 98 per cent plus of Australians with access to mobile coverage.

If there is a polite way of saying 'a multi billion dollar corporation has you by the short and curlies and bad luck, you are a captive customer of not much significance to them', then their area manager does a good job.

No joining in the new technology revolution for you. You won't make them enough money.

If there is a polite way of saying 'I can't really help you much because my team isn't in power', then our federal member does a good job.

It seems that the party divide is so bitter there is no room to negotiate equitable outcomes for small communities in a largely conservative constituency that covers over 90 per cent of this state.

It is only later when you reflect on what has been said that you realise that you have been very politely slapped in the face.

Once again a productive but small section of this country of ours must fight for equity, this time in the communication stakes.

Corporate greed and political blame shifting continue to add to the disadvantages of living in regional and rural Australia.

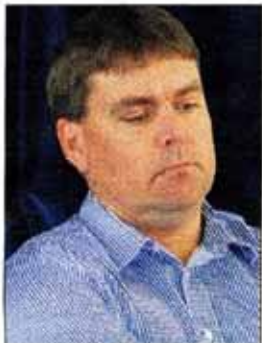
Meanwhile our urban cousins enjoy their numerical advantage often at our expense.

If we are such a burden and if we can't beat them perhaps we should all join them so that we too can have access to the information highway.

VIVONNE RUSDEN
Ungarra

Port Lincoln Times 2 May 2011

Little can be done on phone coverage



Telstra area manager John Tonkin.

PEOPLE in the Ungarra district will remain in the two per cent of Australians without adequate mobile phone coverage for the foreseeable future.

Ungarra and district residents went to a communication forum at the Ungarra Hall on Tuesday night where Telstra area manager John Tonkin explained it was not cost effective for Telstra to provide the infrastructure to improve mobile coverage.

Ungarra Progress Association

president Viv Rusden said it seemed that Telstra's best advice was to put an aerial on the roofs of houses and vehicles to get an adequate signal.

"The high attendance at the public meeting indicates a deep concern about the lack of mobile phone coverage in our area," she said.

"Present government policies do not favour disadvantaged communities such as Ungarra."

Member for Grey Rowan Ramsey also spoke at the meet-

ing, along with Member for Flinders Peter Treloar, and offered his support for any action the community wanted to take to get better coverage.

CFS Region 6 regional commander Kevin May also addressed the meeting and asked if there was a need for a fire siren in Ungarra.

The Ungarra Progress Association will now decide on an action plan at its next meeting on May 2, which it will then present to the community.

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Chris Radford, local resident: “In May 20011, we received a circular letter from Mr Charles Agee, Executive Director, Small Business Sales and Service, Telstra Business, giving us details of ten improvements Telstra had made to serve us better. This angered me a great deal and I emailed Mr Agee telling him that in order to take advantage of these terrific improvements, we needed in the first instance, to be able to access mobile phone service in the area.

A representative from Telstra called and said their technicians were looking into the problem. We were offered, and accepted, a \$100.00 credit by Telstra for the inconvenience.

In discussions with other locals about this payment, they were very aware of these types of payment by Telstra. They called it hush money, to stop complaints from being heard too loudly and by too many.

By December 2011, no response had been received from these technicians.”

Vivonne Rusden, farmer: “I rely on a fixed line even though it is over 50 years old because mobile phone coverage where I need to use it most is intermittent to nonexistent and likely to remain so.

I am finding that I can only communicate with a growing number of family, friends, tradespeople etc. by ringing a mobile device.

I cannot negotiate ‘A Package’ with the Telcos that includes mobile and internet discounting. My rental continues to rise so that I can be offered “free” local and STD calls and my phone call expenses continue to rise because ringing a mobile from a fixed line is a timed call and expensive.

As a reliable form of communication it is essential when my nearest neighbour lives two kilometres away.

Its rising cost is forcing me to reconsider where I live.

The new Telecommunication Highway is putting me, and I would suggest more than 1% of the population, at a physical and financial disadvantage. 99% of Australians may have mobile phones. They cannot be relied on in 99% of Australia.”

Extract from the Ungarra Progress Newsletter 22 February 2011

Gum Leaf

Issue 13 – 22 February 2011 *Express*

An initiative of the Ungarra (and Districts) Progress Association

It's Been a Busy Spring!



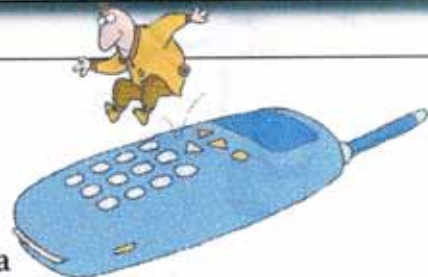
Murray Magpies keep Mum busy!

Public Meeting Mobile Phone Coverage

A public meeting on mobile phone coverage in Ungarra and district will be held on Tuesday 12 April 2011 commencing 11.00 a.m. at the Hall.

Keynote speaker will be John Tonkin, Area Manager for Telstra Countrywide. John will talk about Telstra actively investigating potential network upgrades to improve coverage for Ungarra as part of its ongoing network investment planning. John will take questions from the audience as well be available after the meeting.

Rowan Ramsey, MP for Grey, will also be attending the meeting and it is hoped he can enlighten us, among other things, on digital television coverage as well as take questions from the audience.



This is an important meeting for our district. If these issues affect you, come along and be part of the discussions.

12 April 2011
11.00 a.m.
Ungarra Hall

Submission to 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review - Mobile Phone Coverage Ungarra District SA

Extract from the Ungarra Progress Newsletter 20 November 2011

Gum Leaf *Express*

Page 2 of 6

Mobile Phone Coverage

by Chris Radford

Ernie Papadopoulos, Regional Business Manager, Optus Country, met recently with a small group of locals to assess mobile phone coverage needs for the district of Ungarra. At that meeting, Ernie promised to return with Vin Mullins, Manager, Program Development.

Ernie and Vin returned to Ungarra Thursday 27 October to provide an update on the work Ernie had carried out on our behalf.



*Ernie Papadopoulos
(Vivonne in the background)*

Those present at the meeting were most impressed with the level of commitment by Optus to the community, the sincere interest shown by both Ernie and Vin with the problems caused by the lack of good mobile phone service here and the sincere commitments they gave to solving this.

This involved high level meetings with his Head Office and the drafting of the next two-year plan to include this area. Vin has carried out modelling for the area and reported on some of the options available.



Vin Mullins addressing the meeting

They travelled the Ungarra district, the Dog Fence Road, through Lipson and out to Yeelanna and Tooligie Hill before returning to Port Lincoln.

Both Ernie and Vince can be contacted as follows and are more than willing to take your calls if you feel that you have something to contribute that would facilitate and/or help with their and our efforts to gain coverage here.

Ernie Papadopoulos
Mobile: 0434 800 088
Email: Ernie.Papadopoulos@optus.com.au

Vin Mullins: Mobile 0412 519 442
Email: Vin.Mullins@optus.com.au

Footnote .. Yeelanna and Tooligie Hill were turned on for testing Friday 28 October 2011.

Submission made to the 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review.

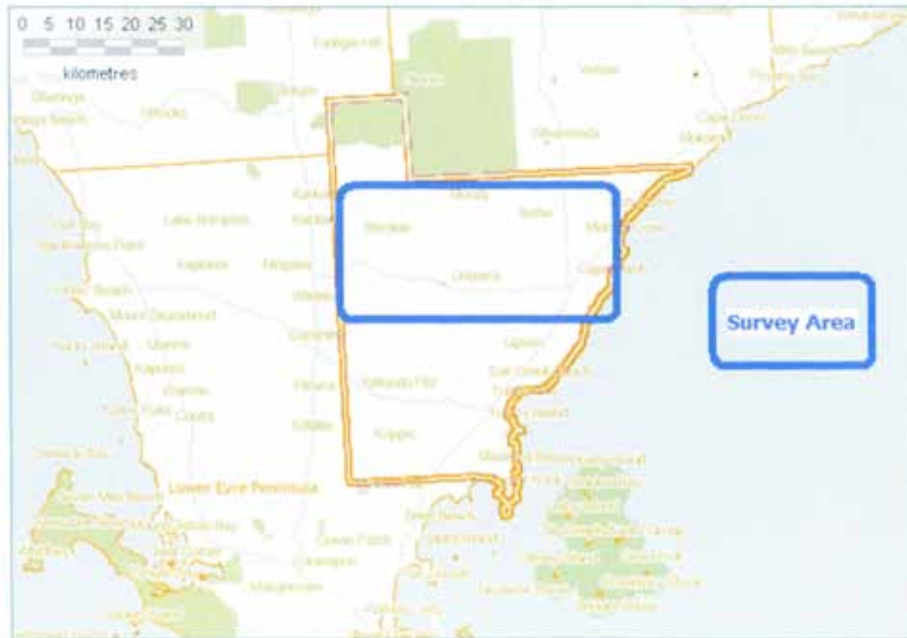
Written and compiled by Christine Radford, [REDACTED], Ungarra, SA on behalf of The Ungarra (and Districts) Progress Association. 9 December 2011

Phone: [REDACTED]

Submission to 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Review - Mobile Phone Coverage Ungarra District SA

Extract from a comprehensive survey of the district carried out by Ms Karen Baines in 2011.

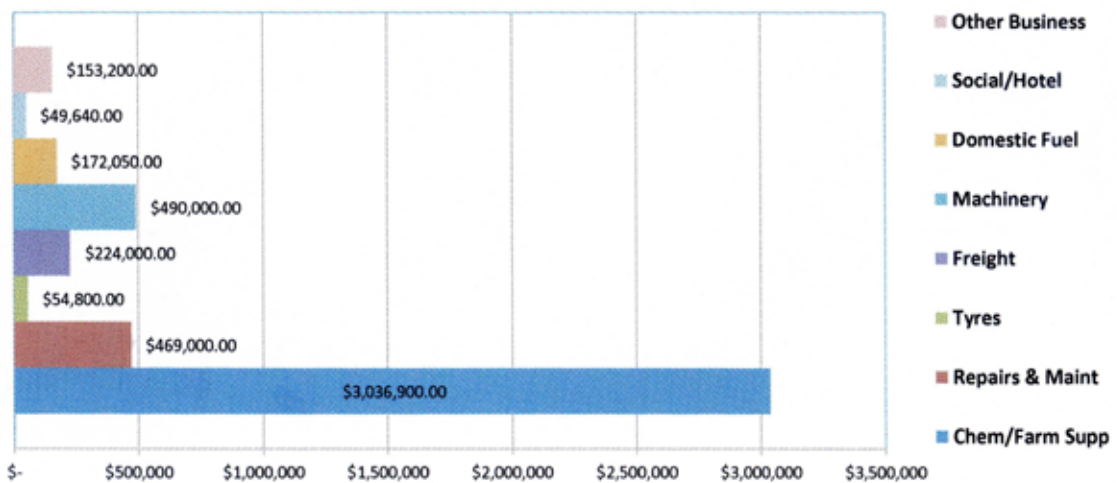
Map of Surveyed Area



Question 21 – Estimate what your household and/or business spend on the following items at Tumby Bay businesses each year. (For farms, liaise with other property households so as not to double up on figures)

The estimated expenditure in Tumby Bay by 29 Ungarra & Districts respondents is \$4 649 590.00 per year
The equates to an average of \$160k per household per year

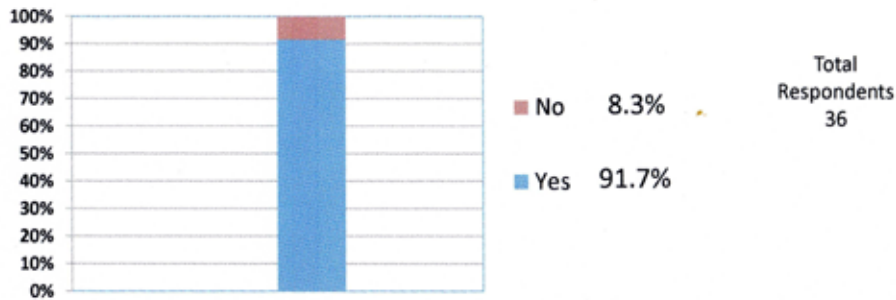
What Ungarra & Districts is worth to Tumby Bay Businesses



Axis range from 0 to 3.5 million dollars

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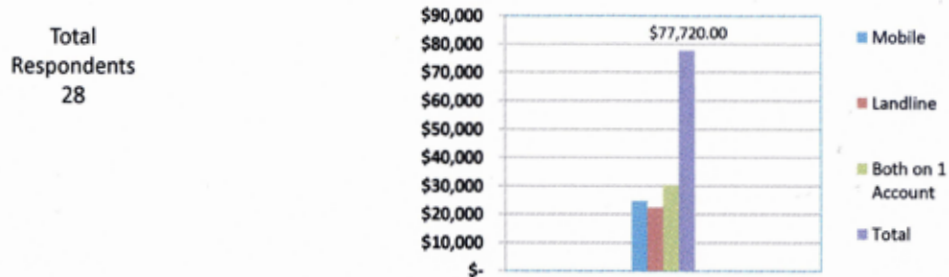
Question 22 - Do you have a landline phone?



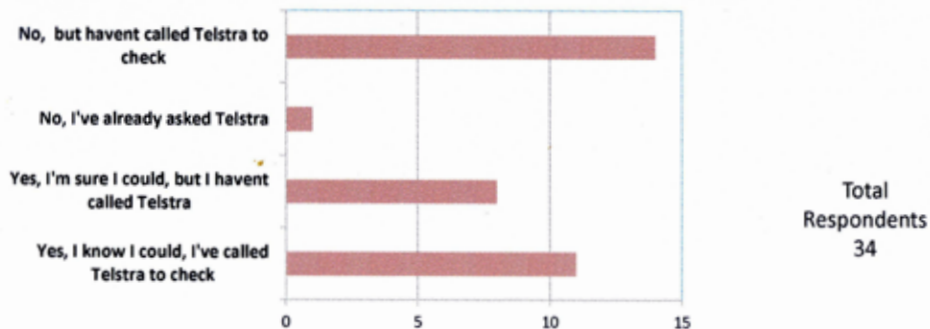
Question 23 - What level of mobile coverage do you receive at your place of residence? (tick any that relate to you)



Question 24 - What dollar amount does your household spend on telephone costs each year?

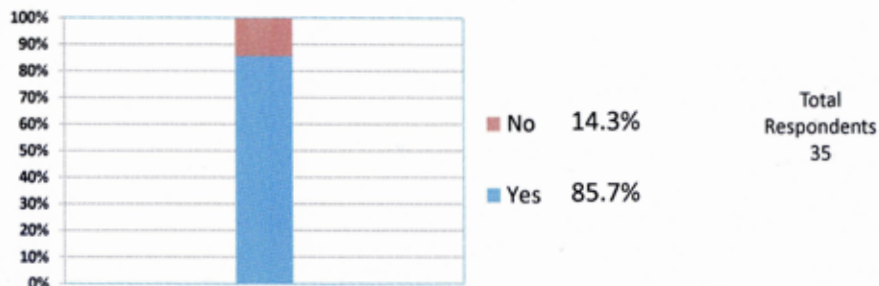


Question 25 - If reliable mobile service were available, could you be on a cheaper telephone and/or internet plan?



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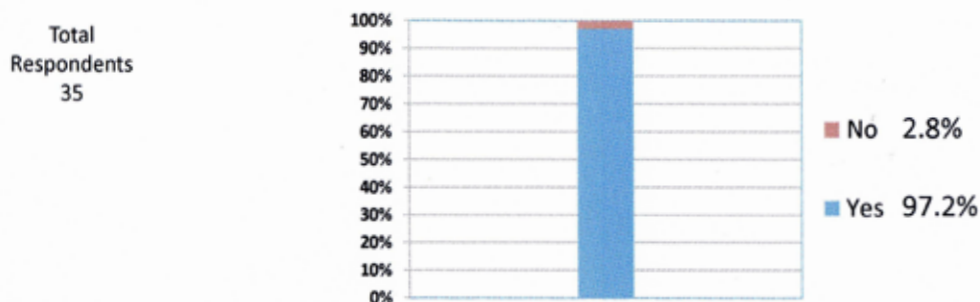
Question 26 - Do you think you should receive a subsidy for your Landline if adequate mobile service cannot be supplied by Telstra?



Question 27 - Do you think the Federal Government should re-instate the 'black spot program' that the previous government had in place?



Question 28 - Do you feel our area, and other rural areas, are being left behind in the technology stakes?



Question 29 - How is your Digital TV reception?

