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**Subject:** Submission - Regional Telecoms Review.doc

### **Submission - Regional Telecoms Review**

Although we are only 100 km from the centre of Sydney we live in an area where communications are extremely difficult.

Mobile telephone coverage ceases as soon as you leave the F3 and so dealing with motor vehicle accidents, bushfire emergencies, floods et cetera is greatly complicated by the inability to directly communicate with people on the ground. Even a simple thing like repair of a fixed line phone becomes difficult when there is no mobile telephone the phone company can ring back on.

We do have satellite coverage provided by the Optus satellite but the reception is very slow (compared to the city it runs at about 1/10th of the speed) and the latency is so high that it makes Skype almost impossible. In times of emergency the satellite coverage is crucial as it provides information on the spread of bushfires and the RFS use it extensively to communicate. However their map-based system often results in very large transmission which the system needs to be able to handle.

I am a professor at Sydney University and I use the satellite system so that I can work on my occupation of educating students from our residence in Wallabadah. This works tolerably well but is frustratingly slow compared to the service in the city.

We have a fixed phone line system which is serviced from a remote microwave tower on top of a local ridge. This is a wonderful asset when it works but this service is becoming increasingly unreliable in recent times. But it has proved to be a vital communications link in the past, particularly at times of bushfire and flood. A significant complication is that we choose AAPT as our service provider so we have to report faults to AAPT who then report it to Telstra. Telstra have a good faults reporting system for their own customers, but we not permitted to access it directly. This cause significant frustration when faults have to be reported – as often the fault can be diagnosed remotely and the equipment reset remotely.

The local volunteer Bush fire brigade in Laguna was sold, a few years ago, a wireless Internet connection by Telstra who assured us that we were in coverage when in fact we were not.

**Question 5.** *What are some examples of what you want to see happen to encourage greater participation in the digital economy by people living and working in regional Australia?*

We submit that the essential thing to encourage greater participation is greater provision of telecommunication and communications services to people living and working in rural Australia so they enjoy equivalent speed and access to those living in the more densely populated metropolitan areas.

*Prof Don White*

For Don and Rosie White

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