

# **Telstra Submission to the Regional Telecommunications Review 2015**

**15 July 2015**

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

1. Telstra welcomes the opportunity to respond to this review by the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee.
2. Telstra is the primary supplier of telecommunications services over fixed and mobile networks for consumers and businesses in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia. We are proud of our history of investing in and servicing these communities. We established Telstra Country Wide in June 2000 in order to improve our retail presence and better understand the telecommunications needs of our customers in non-metropolitan areas. Telstra Country Wide staff live and work in regional and rural communities. In times of natural disaster, be it bushfires, floods or cyclones, the Telstra team is committed to helping the community recover.
3. We are serious about improving the customer experience at Telstra and continue to place significant focus on investing in network infrastructure, so as to provide our customers with better coverage, fewer dropouts and faster downloads. We are also focussed on improving the customer experience at Telstra and have introduced a range of initiatives to improve and simplify our interactions with customers.

### Fulfilment of the Universal Service Obligation

4. Telstra is the largest investor in telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia. Under both regulation and a contract with the Government, we have sole responsibility for fulfilment of the Universal Service Obligation (**USO**), which provides all customers in these areas with access to a Standard Telephone Service (**STS**) on request. Telstra has chosen to deliver price parity for regional customers.
5. Our USO delivery goals are to meet customer expectations, meet our obligations, and to fulfil those expectations and obligations as efficiently as possible. As the USO is technology neutral, we use a mix of technologies to fulfil the USO, including copper, fibre, radio and satellite, and are constantly reviewing the technology platforms we use to deliver the USO against our goals.
6. We are also currently delivering USO services over the national broadband network (**NBN**) fibre to the premises (**FTTP**) network, and are preparing to deliver it over the NBN fibre to the node (**FTTN**) and fibre to the basement (**FTTB**) networks.
7. The policy decision to make a STS available to all Australians, no matter where they live or reside, is the prerogative of the Government. Should the Government choose to investigate potential different approaches, and honour the commercial agreement that has been entered into with Telstra to deliver the USO, we are open to working with the Government and industry on what an alternative solution would look like. If these arrangements were to be reviewed, there would be a number of considerations relevant to any review of this basic consumer protection.

### Mobiles

8. The Australian mobiles market is continuing to provide consumers with constant increases in mobile network coverage and data speeds, and better value prices, due to it being a highly

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competitive market. Telstra operates Australia's largest mobile network covering more than 2.4 million square kilometres, including 4G network access in more than 300 regional towns across Australia.

9. Telstra is focussed on maintaining its network coverage and quality competitive advantage through continuous investment. We recently announced a further investment in mobiles infrastructure of more than half a billion dollars over the next two years, bringing our expected total investment to June 2017 to more than \$5bn, and also announced that we will continue to expand our 4G footprint to 99% of the population. We believe it is vital that government policy does not undermine the strong investment incentives delivered by the highly competitive mobile market.
10. The key barrier to extending mobile coverage is the simple commercial reality that, as population density declines and potential coverage areas become more remote, the business case for investing in coverage becomes weaker. Naturally, there is a point at which the business case fails. As a leading mobile network provider, Telstra has long focussed on extending our coverage as far as possible through the use of more efficient technology.
11. Telstra has committed to significant additional investment under the Government's Mobile Black Spot Programme to extend coverage into unserved regional areas. We support tenders such as this that promote and incentivise continued infrastructure competition rather than regulating access to a single provider. All mobile carriers have the opportunity to co-locate equipment on new towers built under the programme, as they do on any of our towers.

### Regulatory Reform

12. We are committed to continuing to work with Government to identify and reform inefficient regulation. We consider such reforms will help us simplify our business processes and systems, and ensure the regulations remain effective in an NBN world, which in turn will assist us to deliver a better customer experience.
13. The rollout of the NBN will provide fast broadband to all residences and businesses in Australia, and will therefore provide significant consumer benefits. As a result, ensuring the provision of appropriate NBN service levels will become more important as the NBN rollout progresses and NBN service numbers increase.

### Consumer Safeguards

14. Market place innovation and competition should be encouraged to ensure Australian consumers will continue to benefit from world-leading mobile infrastructure and mobile broadband penetration. To promote the widest possible consumer choice, a light touch, flexible regulatory approach should be adopted. Recent enhancements to the *Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code*, and the widespread adoption of Critical Information Summaries by all industry participants, have contributed to the reduction in TIO complaints, and are examples of our preferred regulatory approach.

## 1 Introduction

Telstra welcomes the opportunity to respond to this review by the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee.

Telstra is the primary supplier of telecommunications services over both fixed and mobile networks to consumers and businesses in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia. We are proud of our history of investing in and servicing these communities. We established Telstra Country Wide in June 2000 in order to improve our retail presence, including online, and better understand the telecommunications needs of our customers in non-metropolitan areas.

Telstra's innovation in regional areas has changed the shape of many communities. Local businesses can compete on the world stage with improved internet capabilities; regionally-based health care can offer remote diagnosis and monitoring; rural-based schools can provide the same opportunities for their students as those in the city with online learning; and environmental and farming businesses have improved their productivity through mobile telemetry, possible with the advancements of Telstra's mobile network.

Telstra Country Wide staff live and work in regional and rural communities. They have a greater understanding of the situations that are unique to regional Australia. When natural disasters hit, be it bushfires, floods or cyclones, the Telstra team is committed to helping the community recover. For example, the NSW storms of April 2015 caused significant network damage and record fault volumes in the Hunter Valley region of NSW and surrounding areas. Telstra expended considerable effort and resources to restore both fixed and mobile services as soon as possible.

We are serious about improving the customer experience at Telstra and continue to place significant focus on investing in network infrastructure, so as to provide our customers with better coverage, fewer dropouts and faster downloads. Our forward looking plans include the following initiatives:

- expanding our mobile network footprint to more than 2.5m square kilometres by building in excess of 750 new mobile base stations;
- continuing to expand our 4G mobile footprint to 99% of the population;
- rapidly deploying the next generation of LTE (Long-Term Evolution) technology, including voice over LTE, LTE broadcast and the next stage of LTE advanced delivering peak network speeds of up to 600 mbps;
- leveraging our spectrum holdings to create new levels of coverage and performance leadership for 4GX;
- deploying in excess of 750 small cells to provide in-fill in areas of low signal strength; and
- ensuring we are at the forefront of product development to meet our customers' needs; are quick to market with our products; and have the best products available.

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In recent years, Telstra has been the driving force behind a number of infrastructure projects with links to Australia's bush and outback regions, including the Queensland Government Wireless Network, the Western Australian Regional Mobile Communications Project, and state-wide digital connectivity for the Country Fire Authority of Victoria.

In the Northern Territory, we've been proud of our role in many recent digital infrastructure projects, including:

- Project 13: A \$5.8 million Northern Territory Government co-investment project delivering mobile and broadband infrastructure to 13 Indigenous communities, providing equivalent telecommunications services to those typical of regional centres and cities.
- The Arnhem Land Fibre Project: A \$34 million project, receiving funding from the Northern Territory Government and Rio Tinto to connect nine Indigenous communities and the township of Nhulunbuy to the nation's fibre optic backbone.
- The Sandover Radio Upgrade: A \$2.3 million co-contribution providing upgraded transmission and network infrastructure to the Plenty-Sandover region north-east of Alice Springs. The completion of these projects, locally and around Australia, has added to our extensive knowledge on successfully addressing the infrastructure needs of remote Australia.

We are also focussed on improving the customer experience at Telstra and have introduced a range of initiatives to improve and simplify our interactions with customers. Initiatives include:

- proactively asking customers if we can do better for them, as has been highlighted with our new personalised Check-In service either over the phone or face to face at the nearest Telstra store;
- ensuring that our internal processes are as efficient as they can be, such as how we handle calls or the way in which we send technicians out to customers who need assistance;
- ensuring that the right processes are in place to solve a customer's concerns the first time;
- enabling our customers, in this age of continually evolving technology, to interact with us in alternative ways. For example, we now have a dedicated team that deals with online customer enquiries 24x7, providing an easy and efficient way for us to solve their problems; and
- encouraging all employees to have a meeting, at least once a month, where they discuss ways in which the business can improve customer service.

## 2 Fulfilment of the Universal Service Obligation

Telstra is the largest investor and service provider in fixed line telecommunications in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia. Through the Universal Service Obligation (**USO**) industry levy, we contribute \$141m per annum, representing 64% of all industry contributions, and have the responsibility for provisioning the networks or, where suitable NBN infrastructure is available, seeking NBN access to deliver the USO.

Our investment has allowed all regional, rural and remote customers to access a voice service on request, regardless of where they live, and at the same price as metropolitan customers. A basic reality is that delivering this connectivity to regional and isolated communities is complex and costly<sup>1</sup>.

The voice service we deliver must meet the defined term in the legislation known as the Standard Telephone Service (**STS**). The STS is a term applied in a number of regulatory contexts and consequently Telstra must meet all these regulatory obligations in the delivery of our USO. In this way the Government has established a regulated standard for the voice product that is available to all Australians on request. In addition to obligations that apply by virtue of providing a carriage service, there are 10 STS specific obligations that Telstra must meet when delivering a USO STS. These STS specific obligations are documented in Appendix A.

Consequently, Telstra's delivery of voice services is driven by three simple goals:

- meeting customer expectations;
- meeting both our regulatory and contractual obligations that attach to the STS; and
- fulfilling those expectations and objectives as efficiently as possible.

This has resulted in the use of a range of network technologies to deliver the USO STS to a high standard.

Currently, Telstra delivers the USO STS using a mix of technologies, including copper, fibre, point to point radio (e.g. high capacity radio concentrator system or HCRC) and satellite infrastructure (i.e. Telstra's USOSat service). We are constantly reviewing the technology platforms we use to deliver the USO STS, including the NBN network. For example, Telstra is currently delivering the USO STS over the NBN FTTP network, and is preparing to deliver it over the NBN FTTN and FTTB networks.

For the majority of customers located outside of the NBN fixed line footprint, Telstra will continue to deliver the USO STS over copper infrastructure. However, if our customers indicate that they would prefer to receive their services over alternative technologies, Telstra is open to investigating how this can occur.

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to the delivery of national pricing we have a contract with the Government for customers in certain regional areas to ensure they only pay the cost of an untime local call for calls they would ordinarily pay STD rates.

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Ultimately, our technology choices through which we deliver the USO STS are not static. As long as Telstra has the obligation to provide a voice service, we will continue to review technology platforms against the goals outlined above.

## 2.1. Review of USO policy

The policy decision to make a STS available to all Australians, no matter where they live or reside, is the prerogative of the Government. If the goal of the USO is to deliver a good quality voice service at a level that meets community expectations equitably to all Australians, then we think the current model is working well.

The policy decision to make a STS available to all Australians, no matter where they live or reside, is the prerogative of the Government. Should the Government choose to investigate potential different approaches, and honour the commercial agreement that has been entered into with Telstra to deliver the USO, we are open to working with the Government and industry on what an alternative solution would look like. If these arrangements were to be reviewed, there would be a number of considerations relevant to any review of this basic consumer protection.

While the internet opens up opportunities for more functionality, a reliable basic voice service remains important to our customers particularly those located in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia.

As the STS is attached to a number of regulatory obligations, changes to the USO would have to take into account the flow on impact this would have on the other obligations and considerations of ongoing support, functionality, reliability reporting and service delivery.

If changes are made from the current policy to restrict its application to some but not all customers, this has the potential to increase implementation and compliance complexity, and consequently, industry costs.

## 2.2. Payphones

The USO also obliges Telstra to ensure reasonable access to payphones in all areas of Australia. This has resulted in payphones being installed and maintained in some of the remotest areas of Australia. As with the USO STS, installing and maintaining these services is neither easy nor cheap. The maintenance of payphones often requires the charter of aircraft to transport technicians and materials over significant distances to remote sites, or where local weather conditions prevent access by road.

Telstra considers that, given the declining usage of payphones and the increased availability of mobile telephony, there is a good case for relaxation of regulation in the delivery and performance of payphone services, particularly in urban areas. We do however recognise the importance of payphones to people in rural and remote communities, where there may be limited mobile coverage, and will continue to support the delivery of payphone services to those communities, as long as it remains Government policy to do so.

### 3 Mobiles

The Australian mobiles market is continuing to provide consumers with constant increases in mobile network coverage and data speeds, and better value prices, due to it being a highly competitive market. Mobile connectivity has grown in importance as the combination of smart phones and tablets (with increased mobile broadband speeds and capacity) are changing the way we live. The Telstra mobile network currently reaches over 99.3% of the population and is by far the largest mobile network in the country, covering 2.4 million square kilometres of the Australian land mass, including 4G network access in more than 300 regional towns across Australia.

Telstra is focussed on maintaining its network coverage and quality competitive advantage through continuous investment, expansion and upgrade of our wireless networks for the long term. On 9 July 2015, our CEO announced a further increase in investment into our mobile network by providing more than another half a billion dollars for mobiles infrastructure over the next two years. In total, over the three years to June 2017 we will expect to have invested more than \$5bn into our mobile network.

As the first carrier to bring 4G mobile services to regional Australia, we know how important high-speed mobile can be to supporting local businesses, tourism and education, so we are also continuing the expansion of our 4G footprint to 99% of the population. We have included a case study in Appendix B to demonstrate the benefits to consumers of extending mobile coverage.

We believe it is vital that government policy does not undermine the strong investment incentives delivered by the highly competitive mobile market. The mobiles market is characterised by carriers competing on technology, network coverage and quality, customer service and price. This structure has provided Telstra with a clear commercial incentive to invest in infrastructure to expand our network coverage, and make the latest technology available to our customers in competition with the other mobile network providers. Since we launched our Next G<sup>®</sup> network almost a decade ago, more than 99% of our network has been funded by investing our own capital.

It is competition, not regulation or industry policy, which has delivered waves of investment in regional Australia over many years. The Federal Government's Black Spot Programme seeks to leverage competition by complementing and encouraging commercial investment in areas where the business case cannot be made without a public co-contribution (see below section 3.2). In contrast, any policy that sought to remove network differentiation would destroy the investment incentives created by competition and significantly impede network expansion.

#### 3.1. Extending mobile coverage in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia

The key barrier to extending mobile coverage is the simple commercial reality that, as population density declines and potential coverage areas become more remote, the business case for investing in coverage becomes weaker. Naturally, there is a point at which the business case fails. As a leading mobile network provider, Telstra has long focussed on extending our coverage as far as possible through the use of more efficient technology.

On a practical level, more streamlined planning processes for establishing new, or extending existing, mobile tower sites would help lower barriers to investment. The Development Application (DA) process in each State is largely dictated by Local Government planning schemes. While NSW and Victoria have adopted overarching State Telecommunications Codes or Policies, the timeframes for Local Government in assessing applications rarely meet the regulated timeframes. It is not uncommon for a DA to take 6-12 months for an approval or refusal.

We believe that all States should be encouraged to develop planning policies that accelerate the DA timeframes and create opportunities for 'Complying Developments', which will by-pass the often politically charged Local Government DA process. In addition, some local councils (principally in Queensland) are imposing excessive application fees (in the order of \$20,000) to assess, by comparison, modest infrastructure. We believe that local councils should adopt a fee structure that reflects the cost of determining the application.

Access to existing infrastructure is not a barrier to investment, because access to facilities and backhaul are regulated. The extension of NBN backhaul capacity to remote mobile network towers is unlikely to improve the business case for providing mobile services because working towers all have backhaul in place, available at rates that are commercially agreed or that are regulated by the ACCC. Any operator can access existing towers and their associated facilities. The existing open access regulatory regime is well established and supported by commercially negotiated access agreements that allow for reciprocal access to sites and co-location of equipment.

Australian mobile network operators have well established reciprocal access agreements that are routinely used. Carriers currently operate under the National Co-location Task Force (NCTF) framework, which governs the timing and processes for site sharing to ensure consistency and uniformity in the industry. The agreement to follow this framework, which places operational detail around the facilities access regime of the *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Cth), was assembled in collaboration under a joint working party and with the carriers collectively providing input. Telstra has a demonstrated record of complying with its obligations and commitments in this space, and considers that the co-location arrangements are working.

### 3.2. Mobile Black Spot Programme

Telstra has been providing mobile services in Australia for nearly 35 years, having been at the forefront of every generation of mobile technology through to the 4G networks of today. Along that journey we have been intimately involved with extending coverage through the rollout of new towers as well as creating new and innovative ways to stretch, and improve mobile coverage, into the far corners of the nation.

Given this experience, we are well aware of the challenges facing communities with limited access to a mobile network. It is why Telstra continues to make significant investments in mobile network infrastructure and is excited to play an important role in delivering mobile coverage for the first time to a large number of regional communities as part of the Federal Government's Mobile Black Spot Programme.

The most important factor in achieving significant coverage extension into uneconomic areas is public/private co-investment, where public or community funds are used to improve the otherwise negative business case for mobile operators. This is demonstrated by the outcome of the Mobile Black Spot Programme, which has resulted in Telstra's commitment over the next three years to spend \$165 million to build 429 new 3G/4G towers to deliver mobile service to over 400 communities across all states and territories, who currently have no coverage in or around their towns. Our commitment has also leveraged \$175 million of investment from Federal, State and Local governments, and communities. This will result in a combined investment of over \$340 million in regional telecommunications.

This means places like Leeuwin in Western Australia, Cape Otway in Victoria, Coffee Camp in New South Wales, Widgee in Queensland, Lulworth in Tasmania, Imanpa in Northern Territory and Fregon in South Australia will be receiving coverage from a new Telstra tower, as well as hundreds more.

In addition to the new mobile towers, we will be installing 250 Small Cells to deliver high speed 4G data services in some small country towns where suitable Telstra infrastructure is available. There will be 200 nationally and another 50 specifically for Queensland, as part of our arrangements with the Queensland Government. We are now working with the Federal Government on how to allocate these Small Cells. At this stage, the Small Cell technology can only provide data services, however, we are working on implementing Voice over LTE (Long-Term Evolution) technology that will allow customers to make voice calls using 4G.

We will be offering other carriers the opportunity to use space on our towers to install their own equipment and offer services to their customers from these towers, in accordance with existing industry practices. Our competitors are well-resourced and free to invest in extending their networks into previously unserved regional areas. So this is not just good news for Telstra customers, but an opportunity for all carriers to invest in expanding their coverage in regional Australia.

We are proud to have put forward a strong bid for regional Australia as part of a competitive tender process, and we look forward to rolling out the new towers and expanding coverage for hundreds of communities over the next three years.

## 4 Regulatory Reform

### 4.1. Red-tape regulation

We are continuing to work with the Federal Government to identify and reform inefficient 'red-tape' regulation. Some of these regulations have been in place for many years and were introduced at a time when many key developments, such as the growth in telecommunications competition, the rapid growth in internet use and mobility, and the NBN had not yet occurred.

While some key regulatory reforms have already been achieved, we believe there are further changes that will help us deliver a better experience for our customers by simplifying processes and systems, and improving efficiency, as well as ensuring all regulations remain effective in an NBN world. These reforms include:

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- Emergency Services - simplify current emergency services regulation and processes;
  - Land access regime - simplify the land access regime and remove the unnecessary prescription to access land to install services/carry out works;
  - Low income measures - update them for an NBN world and make them applicable industry-wide;
  - Australian Consumer Law cooling off periods - reform the cooling-off periods to allow services to be provided during the period, and thus meet customer requirements; and
  - Consumer information obligations - simplify and remove unnecessary prescription in the customer information framework in the *Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code*.

## 4.2. NBN rollout

The rollout of the NBN will provide fast broadband to all residences and businesses in Australia, and will therefore provide significant consumer benefits. The NBN will for the first time provide many people in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia with access to high speed broadband.

The NBN will also be used to provide voice services in the NBN fixed line footprint, including in regional centres and large country towns, where Telstra will have an obligation to disconnect its legacy voice services after the 18 month migration window. Consumers located in NBN fixed wireless areas may also decide to substitute their legacy copper service with a VoIP service over the NBN.

As a result of the above, many voice and broadband services in regional and rural parts of Australia, and to a lesser extent in remote, will be transitioned to the NBN. Accordingly, ensuring the provision of appropriate NBN service levels for new connections, the rectification of faults and appointment keeping, will become increasingly important as the NBN rollout progresses and NBN service numbers increase.

## 5 Consumer Safeguards

Telstra considers it imperative that market place innovation and competition is encouraged to promote the widest possible consumer choice, and a light touch, flexible regulatory approach should therefore be adopted.

The registration of the industry developed *Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code (TCP Code)* and the widespread adoption of Critical Information Summaries by all industry participants has contributed to the reduction in new complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO), and is an example of our preferred regulatory approach. For 2013-14, the TIO reported 19,706 or 12.4% fewer complaints across the industry.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> TIO complaints the year in review 2013-2014 - page 4.

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The TCP Code is a code of practice developed by industry self regulation processes dealing with the rights and safeguards for consumers and the obligations on suppliers. The main consumer safeguards introduced include:

- provision of summary information about products (called a Critical Information Summary) to be made available to consumers before sale;
- additional information displaying unit pricing information in advertisements; (i.e. cost of a two minute national mobile call including flag fall, one SMS and one Mb of data);
- mandatory voice/SMS and data usage notification requirements to be notified at 50%, 85% and 100% of included value for residential customers;
- tighter timeframes for complaint acknowledgement and resolution and obligations to advise customers of complaint outcomes; and
- more explicit promotion to customers of the alternative dispute resolution services offered by the TIO.

Importantly, for the first time, the TCP Code introduced an industry based compliance scheme including the creation of a new independent body, Communications Compliance (**CC**), to monitor the performance of suppliers in complying with the code. This includes the mandatory requirement for all suppliers to provide annual attestations to CC that they are complying with the code.

Telstra endorsed the TCP Code and its objectives. Telstra also actively supported and contributed to its development as it provides the optimum solution to improve and protect customer safeguards, and promote good customer service practices across the industry.

## 6 Appendix A - Obligations that Telstra must meet when delivering a USO STS

Obligation	Description	Statutory Reference
<b>Standard form of agreement</b>	Telstra may contract with customers by reference to a standard form of agreement ( <b>SFOA</b> ). If Telstra uses a SFOA, it is obliged to make the SFOA available to its customers on request and provide reasonable notice of adverse changes.	Part 23 of the <i>Telecommunications Act (Cth) (TEA)</i> (see in particular section 479).
<b>Pre-selection</b>	If providing a STS over legacy infrastructure (i.e. copper PSTN/IDSN and wideband PSTN/ISTN), Telstra must comply with ACMA's pre-selection determinations/requirements, which permit the end-user to preselect another CSP for long distance and fixed to mobile calls.	Part 17 of TEA.
<b>Calling Line Identification</b>	Telstra is required to take all reasonable steps to ensure that a switching system used in connection with the supply of a STS is capable of providing calling line identification (CLI).	Part 18 of TEA.
<b>Operator and directory assistance services</b>	In supplying a STS, Telstra must make operator and directory assistance services available to each end user.	Parts 2 and 3 of Schedule 2 of the TEA.
<b>Itemised Billing</b>	Telstra must generally provide itemised billing for each of its customers supplied with a STS (except for untimed local calls).	Part 5 of Schedule 2 of the TEA.
<b>Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) Standard</b>	In supplying a STS, Telstra must comply with the CSG Standard, which sets out performance standards for connections, the rectification of faults, and appointment keeping.	Part 5 of the <i>Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999 (Cth) (TCPSS Act)</i> .  Telecommunications (Customer Service Guarantee) Standard 2011.

Obligation	Description	Statutory Reference
<b>Emergency call services</b>	In supplying a STS, Telstra must carry emergency calls from customers and deliver them to interconnection points for handling by emergency call persons.	Part 23 of TEA (see in particular section 479).
<b>Priority Assistance</b>	If a STS is provided by Telstra in fulfilment of its USO, Telstra must provide priority assistance to those customers who apply for it and meet the eligibility criteria.	Telstra Carrier Licence Condition 19 and Telstra's Priority Assistance for Life Threatening Medical Conditions Policy.
<b>Disability requirements</b>	Telstra is required to ensure that equipment is available to customers with a disability to allow them to access a STS. Telstra meets this obligation via our Disability Equipment Program.	Part 2 of TCPSS Act.
<b>Continued access to un-timed local calls</b>	If Telstra charges its customers for local calls using a STS we must provide customers with an option for local calls to be untimed.	Part 4 of the TCPSS Act.

## 7 Appendix B - Mobile case study: the Barbetti Farm, Bunbury, Western Australia

Mark and Marg Barbetti, live and work on the 'Barbetti Farm', just outside of Bunbury in Western Australia, with their three sons. The husband and wife team also employ a couple of farm hands to help with the day-to-day running of the business and livestock.

Mark has grown up around farms his whole life. His family has owned the dairy farm he currently lives on for 40 years. In that time, Mark has seen the way farms are managed change dramatically. With the advent of smart phones, fast broadband and other connected devices, technology and network connectivity have played a monumental role in driving innovation and opening up new doors for the industry.

### Our Story

The biggest influence technology has had on the business has been the role mobile phones have played in allowing the Barbettis to run the farm regardless of where they are.

Mobile phones weren't a common thing when Mark did his apprenticeship. However, over the years they rose in prominence, and around the turn of the century they became a crucial part of running a farm – which would have been great for Barbetti Farm, if it hadn't been in such a remote location for network access.

Mark says Telstra's investment in rolling out 3G across Australia was the turning point when coverage improved dramatically. As Telstra has continued investing in strengthening its networks with the roll out of 4G, and soon the super-fast 4GX, the Barbettis have seen their farm evolve from being a cluster of paddocks and animals, to one giant connected office.

"Before the arrival of 3G, as you made your way through the gullies between the hills, calls would drop out. Sometimes we'd spend half the day out of range, so any tasks that came up that involved accessing the internet, or making phone calls, would have to be done when you were back at the office.

"Now I do everything on the move with my iPhone. I order supplies, negotiate rates, sell stock, and communicate with delivery drivers. I don't have to go to town and ask questions with traders every time something comes up. We don't miss a beat anymore, which means we can do more each day and Marg and I have more time to relax.

"I can have labourer in the opposite corner of the farm to me, but still keep in contact with them to ensure they're across the work I need them to pick up," said Mark.

For the couple, being this well connected has an even more important meaning. Just over two years ago, Mark had a heart transplant to fix medical issues he'd been experiencing since 1996. While the medical issues are now under control, he sees it as vital he can always make contact with emergency services and family in the case something goes wrong.