



Thu 23/07/2015 10:28

Dick Wells <

Submission

To secretariat@rtirc.gov.au

Please accept this brief submission ,late as it is, as I only became aware of the Review in preparing a letter to the Minister for Communications about the appalling telecommunications that we suffer . Attached is a copy of the letter I have sent to the Minister which briefly describes our issues.

Addressing some of the specific questions that you raise in your issues paper:

Questions 1, 5 and 8.

With the trend to encourage more electronic communication by Government agencies such as Medicare and the ATO, by financial institutions such as Banks and superannuation funds and by other small business it is increasingly the case that you cannot interact with such organisations without satisfying their security requirements which often require access to mobile networks. For example when seeking to make an internet banking transaction most financial institutions require the sending of a security code via SMS or mobile. This is extremely limiting on undertaking even the most basic transactions when there is no mobile coverage. There is a presumption by most users that the most reliable way to communicate with a person is by mobile. For example when we log a fault with Telstra the immediate reaction is to offer a redirection of calls to the mobile which is of course useless. Call centre staff simply do not understand that we don't have mobile coverage.

Question 9 and 11

In the absence of mobile network coverage we are reliant on a satellite connection for the internet. This is slow and expensive, We currently pay \$76.95 per month for 3Gb of downloads. The speeds we are able to access prohibit participation on online meetings such as webinar or downloading graphics. This is very limiting in participating in activities in Australia and overseas.

The optimal solution for us would be to connect to the fibre cable nearby or the faster 4G network. According the local Telstra management neither option is being considered.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Regards

Dick Wells

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP.
Minister for Communications
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

23 July 2015

Dear Minister

I am writing to you out of desperation, to seek your assistance in fixing the appalling lack of adequate telecommunications services that we are suffering.

I live at Tidbinbilla in the ACT, some 10kms as the crow flies from central Canberra, so we can hardly be rated as remote! We have no mobile reception and an unreliable telephone landline that is frequently out of service for extended periods, often up to 10 days at a time. In addition to that, we rely on a slow and inordinately expensive satellite Internet service. When out of order, the landline phone rings continually as people try to contact us but it cannot be answered. We cannot make outgoing calls.

This inequitable and inadequate access to reliable telecommunication services has significant impact on us, firstly, on my ability to run my business, but also on our everyday life. We have ageing parents who need to contact us for assistance, and all the other everyday activities. For example, my wife was recently rushed to a hospital. Calling emergency services for her or myself from home would clearly not be an option, as I would have to drive some distance to a high point on my farm to attempt a mobile call. Furthermore, many organizations now assume universal access to mobiles, for example banks and Medicare send security codes to mobiles that are a prerequisite for access to Internet banking or services.

To add insult to injury, our nearest neighbour is the Tidbinbilla Deep Space Tracking station, which is able to communicate with satellites deep in space. Yet we cannot communicate even with Canberra! Optic fiber cable was installed to the Tracking station and the Fauna Reserve headquarters a few kilometers up the valley. We however continue to endure and suffer from access facilitated by an ancient copper cable 17 km long, running through swamps and creeks to the Point Hut exchange. The cable has frequent outages.

Over the years I have resorted to seeking assistance from the Telecommunications Ombudsman to stimulate some action, but this has only resulted in a short-term solutions and offers of compensation. We are not after compensation; we just want reliable and adequate telecommunications!

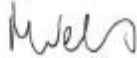
I feel that our decades-long effort with Telstra management to get an adequate and equitable access to telecommunication services is now exhausted. The Telstra field staff who eventually come to identify faults and patch up this failing infrastructure are also frustrated, and presumably their frequent and extended trips to us are very costly. The Telstra Area manager has advised me that there are no plans to upgrade services in our region. He affirmed however, that we should expect a reliable landline.

I think you would agree that we clearly do not have a reliable access to telecommunications, which is surely a reasonable aspiration for Australians. I have seen much better access in many developing countries. I am now seeking your urgent assistance in getting that most

basic of service – a reliable telephone, consistent with our governments' rhetoric. Access to modern Wifi networks is bit an aspiration too far away! Please help us?

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Chief Executive of Telstra, Andrew Penn and my local member Gai Brodtmann MP.

Yours faithfully.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dick Wells', written in a cursive style.

Dick Wells

Riverlea