

27 July 2024

[REDACTED]

RE: REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

Indigo Shire has pursued a range of activities to advance mobile and internet connectivity in our region.

- Regular liaison and reporting with regional nbn and Telstra representatives in regard to local infrastructure black spots, network expansions and upgrades
- Community engagement - Digital Connectivity Survey & Mobile Blackspot Mapping August/September 2023
- Regional partnership - Ovens Murray Digital Futures Project and Strategy
- Information sharing via Council's monthly business newsletter – links to grants and programs supporting improved connectivity, digital literacy and cyber security
- Participation, promotion and support for regional digital literacy initiatives – Click Region and Rural Women Online

Digital Connectivity Survey & Mobile Blackspot Mapping Report

From August to September 2023, we sought feedback from the community on internet connectivity issues as well as blackspots.

This was an opportunity for Indigo Shire residents and business owners to provide direct input into where and how funding to improve mobile coverage, mobile blackspots, NBN connectivity and speeds and other mobile network (EFTPOS) coverage should be prioritised.

The research included a survey of households, a survey of businesses and a mobile blackspot mapping tool.

Some general outcomes:

- There are many blackspots within Indigo region.
 - There are blackspots in townships especially Beechworth.
 - There are blackspots in rural areas, on the outskirts of towns (ie Stanley, area between Beechworth and Tarrawingee).
 - Many people in our region work remotely, or conduct business from home, operating with patchy, unreliable mobile connection.
 - Consumers in outlying rural areas are disadvantaged by lack of NBN and mobile service. Many depend on satellite services which are patchy and expensive. Several customers maintain a landline service – reliable connection but an added expense.
 - Connectivity is adversely impacted in weather events, particularly big rain events, and during peak demand times (ie 4pm once children get home from school).
 - Connectivity in the new estate at Tangambalanga has been reported as poor/patchy with poor planning to facilitate NBN fibre connections and lack of mobile service in peak demand times.
- [REDACTED]

- Many rural and outlying consumers have moved to Starlink network at greater cost to achieve workable and reliable connectivity.

Household Connectivity Survey

The majority of the total 45 responses were Beechworth residents. There were a large range of comments provided from respondents with specific issues. Results showed:

- 53% of respondents conduct a home-based business
- Mobile reception - 27% of respondents reported either poor or very poor service, 42% reported average/patchy, 22% reported a good reception and only 9% reported an excellent (or other) reception.
- Internet availability – 18% of respondents reported good availability at maximum plan speeds, 53% very inconsistent speeds, and balance of responses reported regular outages and interruptions.
- Internet service speed – 40% reported either none or poor speeds less than 30Mbps, 35% reported average performance at 30 – 60 Mbps and 22% reported good to excellent speed 60-110 Mbps +
- 58% of respondents report issues to their service provider, 40% said they have given up reporting faults and others reported a range of actions like reporting to a Local Member of Parliament
- When asked about understanding of current provision planning in Indigo LGA, 53% said they knew nothing about plans and upgrades to mobile services, 40% said they knew nothing about plans and upgrades to NBN services

Why was this consultation undertaken?

Better mobile and internet service coverage across Indigo Shire is a key issue that we regularly and strongly advocate for - whether it be in the case of an emergency, running a business or day-to-day activity, connectivity is a critical part of everyone's lives.

In order to accurately understand the current connectivity issues and in turn, to produce an updated Connectivity Report 2023 which we'll use to help telecommunications providers identify where improvements are most needed, we needed community input.

What did we find out?

We received tremendous feedback to our blackspot mapping survey. Numerous known and unknown black spots were reported. The results of the survey have been forwarded to Telstra to ensure planning for upgrades in the affected service areas is taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely,


ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR