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## Regional Telecommunications Review

To whom it may concern,

The Shire of Esperance is a local government area located in the southern part of Western Australia, covering an area of 42,547 square kilometres. The town's population is approximately 14,000 people with the main centre being the town of Esperance. The Shire's economy is predominantly based around the Agricultural sector and associated support services. Mining and Tourism also play a key role in the region's economy.

As a remote location in WA, telecommunications are a critical element to developing the region both economically and socially. Unfortunately, telecommunication services in the Shire is not equitable to other parts of Australia especially in relation to;

- mobile service coverage;
- choice and therefore costs of mobile service provider;
- speed, capacity and cost of internet services; and
- reliability and resilience of mobile and broadband services

In addition, other issues identified by the Shire more specifically include;

- During peak tourism season, school holidays and public holidays the network is unable to meet demand which impacts businesses, visitors and the community causing overall negativity about the town.
- Agricultural farming enterprises are being constrained by the lack of connectivity limiting productivity, efficiency and overall improved farming practices.
- Emergency services and responses have been impacted by poor telecommunications which can be the difference in life threatening situations.
- Poor telecommunication services are impacting access to health care, education, business and social services.

These issues continue to impede the local community, businesses and visitors to the Shire and whilst the Federal and State regional telecommunications funding programs are appreciated, the reality is that there only making a small effect on the issue.

The Shire believe that in order for this critical issue to be addressed a more wholistic approach needs to be considered including;

- Undertake an effective audit of mobile coverage as soon as possible identifying the level of service that should be expected at each LGA.
- Refine the mobile black spot program design to encourage solutions that provide effective coverage without needing multiple sims and mobile plans.
- Request that telecommunications carriers monitor and report the level of broadband and mobile service and adjust capacity or upgrade the network to meet peak demand in areas that have significant changes in population throughout the year.
- Identify mechanisms to encourage or require telecommunications carriers to identify the most vulnerable parts of the network to power failures and work with power providers and other to increase resilience against power failure.
- Achieve timely mobile roaming during times of emergency and potentially more broadly third-party access to network infrastructure.
- Ensure that the extent of mobile services coverage does not diminish as a result of replacing existing 3G services with 4G and 5G.
- Provide libraries, Community Resource Centres, Small Business Development Centres and Chamber of Commerce and Industries with additional funding and support to undertake digital inclusion programs.
- Ensure the USO remains in place for basic phone and internet services until such time as new services are proven to be on par or even better than current services. Any such change should include proper regulation with a focus on the transition for current users ensuring accessibility, affordability and reliability.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this important issue and we trust our ideas may help in building more equitable telecommunications services in regional and remote areas across Australia.

Should you have any further queries regarding this matter please contact [REDACTED] or via [REDACTED]

