

We live a one hour's drive from the city of Sydney, yet the poor telecommunication infrastructure would suggest we live in a much more remote locale.

I can accept limited choices for mobile (only Optus or Telstra work here), I am fortunate that at my house we get a decent reception, however a short stroll down the road I lose signal entirely so I just hope that I don't need to contact emergency services while I am walking my dog or at any time I am outside my house in those frequent black spots.

Where I really take issue is in the lack of suitable internet. We are seemingly too unimportant to receive NBN, instead 'Sky Buster' is the answer in lieu of a high-quality fiber cable. I mentioned previously we are one hour, or 73 KM to be exact from Sydney CBD, how this was deemed too difficult / unimportant/ remote (I still don't know the reason) to have the 'real' NBN I just can't imagine.

So here we are stuck with ADSL and Telstra, yes only Telstra operate in these far-flung regions. I find it hard to limit my frustration and disappointment with such an uncaring, incompetent, and incapable operator, so I will highlight just the salient points:

1 – the reliability of the internet is poor. So much so we had **no internet for five weeks** covering the Christmas and New Year period of December 2020 to January 2021. Not to have internet is not unusual, but to be without it for such an extended period is. The quality of the internet when we have it is also sub-par, we are used to buffering during streaming and dropouts, but we have learned to live with those, however I think we can all agree in 2021 not having internet for five weeks is unacceptable.

2 – the ~~service~~ failure to offer customer support only then exasperates the problem. Telstra has a 'outage checker' but it's not accurate, Telstra encourage you to message them (don't call), but the speed with which you make progress via messaging is glacial. Calling is an option (if you look hard enough you find the number), but the hold times can be outrageous and the quality of the person on the other line is poor. Last Wednesday **I lost six hours of my working day messaging Telstra**. We had no internet and wondered why. I'm still wondering, as after six hours of making no progress with them via message, I requested a level three technician call me, sadly that call has not materialized. I took the initiative and bought a new modem which seems to have fixed the issue...but I am not sure what the issue was or if I really needed to have spent \$250 on a new modem when the Telstra supplied one should have worked, been able to have been fixed, or at least been replaced by Telstra.

I could share more stories of incompetence (our initial setup was delayed as the modem was sent to the wrong location), carelessness (during correspondence with Telstra, they sent me other customers details in error) or just plain stupidity (I waited on hold for two hours to check if there was an outage in the area – there was. Telstra then called me to tell me there was an outage).

I think this situation could be considered comical if it wasn't so serious. Access to reliable mobile and internet is a basic requirement in COVID 2021. Having an operator who cares when there is a problem and communicates updates is essential to building trust in what has been a forgotten part of telecommunication-land.