

Our Ewingar area and community suffered extensive losses during the 2019 Long Gully bushfire.

Two people died. Wildlife and stock died and were injured. Many homes were lost – some which were defensible. Every resident lost some essential infrastructure such as water infrastructure and fencing. The bush and what pasture there was given the drought was also devastated.

This tragedy might have been averted had our area not had such limited communications.

Most of our community rely on landlines and internet satellite. However, in most parts of our area there is no mobile phone reception, and during the fires even landlines failed when the power – and Telstra's back-up - failed.

As a community, we are making plans for our future protection including training more members of the community as fire fighters, and applying for funding for a UHF repeater – but because of the topography, even with a repeater the signal will only reach some of our residents.

This endangers our community, many of whom are ageing. It also makes our job as fire fighters more difficult. The NSW Bushfire Inquiry Recommendations 30; 67; 68 can only be met with additional telecommunication towers in blackspots. So too Recommendations 125-7 of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements also stressed the importance of prioritising delivery of national Public Safety mobile broadband to allow first responders to use internet based technology.

To safeguard our community living in the remoter areas it is essential that improved App messaging and up to date fire information is incorporated as a priority, along with improved towers for connectivity and to receive the messaging.

A project for a telecommunications tower was submitted this year by Clarence Valley Council on the Regional Connectivity Program Project Noticeboard for the area of Fine Flower, Baryulgil and Ewingar. Kevin Hogan, our local MP, supported our need for improved connectivity. However, still our area was not considered in the last round for Mobile Black Spot.

I do hope you are able to give some consideration to the needs of our communities.

Many thanks  
Sincerely

Hayley Katzen

As a member of the Ewingar Rural Fire Brigade, and on behalf of the Ewingar community

My contact details





No requirement to keep this confidential