

Good afternoon,

I write to you in regards to the Regional Telecommunications Review 2021. I am the Town Maintenance Supervisor for the Shire of Upper Gascoyne, we have had nothing but issues with our service provider "Telstra". We currently have a 3G Tower, which is faulty at best. With no real commitment from either the State Government or Telstra to upgrade it to 4G. We have limited access to Telecommunications.

This often effects the community by the following;

1. Local School- unable to utilise digital content for classes.
2. Local Government - often interrupted, mostly when urgency is required. (Rain events with road closures required on out digital formats) Unable to complete day to day tasks. Correspondence delays. We utilise NBN satellite for Internet services.
3. Emergency situations – Flood events, accidents, again services drop out when required.
4. Local aboriginal community – Currently require Telehealth for consultations. We currently have one individual having to drive to Geraldton for consults due to the unreliability of the Phone services.
5. Covid 19 – Lack of accessibility to Covid Services due to poor coverage.
6. Tourism – Massive impact on Tourism in the area, having no access to town services, the bandwidth isn't capable of handling the influx at peak tourist periods. Whilst it's fantastic that the state government has promoted travel within WA, it has failed to take into account the extra stress it puts on local infrastructure not designed for the amount of people.
7. Pastoral properties – Have no mobile coverage. They have to utilise older technology which is scarcely serviced.

This is just an introduction to the many problems we face in our remote area due to poor Telecommunications.

Kind regards,

Sean Walker
Town Maintenance Supervisor

[Redacted signature block]

[Redacted contact information block]

To Whom it may concern,

Furthermore to my previous email, please see below our Telecommunications Issues, concerns and attempts to have them rectified.

Issues:

- Loss of all mobile coverage during February rain event for 5 days.
- Loss of mobile coverage and poor mobile internet speeds since February Rain event and Cyclone Seroja.
- Constant loss of all Mobile coverage, especially in the mornings between 4am and 10am.
- Extremely poor Mobile internet speeds- on average 0.7Mbps Download and 0.9Mbps Upload. This doesn't improve at any time.
- We currently only have a 3G tower.

I have driven from Gascoyne junction to Carnarvon (170km), Carnarvon to Geraldton (490km), and the same again in reverse. I used the Telstra Speed Test app the entire trip. Here are the results. It seems the whole Gascoyne Region is not functioning.

Saturday 31st July- Gascoyne Junction, numerous times throughout the day- Average of 0.2Mbps Download

Saturday 31st July- Carnarvon, South River Road, 9pm, 0.7Mbps Download.

Sunday 1st August- Wooramel Roadhouse, 6Mbps Download.

Sunday 1st August- Overlander Roadhouse, 0.7Mbps Download.

Sunday 1st August- Billabong Roadhouse, 0.4Mbps Download.

Sunday 1st August- 150km North of Northampton, 46Mbps Download.

Concerns:

- Often, the loss/lack of coverage occurs during rain/flooding events. Limiting our ability to assist the community during emergency events. Potential injury or loss of life.
- The loss/lack of coverage often limits our ability to communicate our road closures and road condition reports. This has/could lead to injury or loss of life, extensive road damage.
- The lack/loss of coverage disconnects the community on the North side of the Gascoyne River during flood events.
- The inability to access essential services such as DFES, Saint John Ambulance, Royal Fling doctor, the Police during emergency events.
- The inability for access to online assistance in the Community Resource Centre. Such as Centrelink, Telehealth, Postal Services, Department of Transport services.
- The inability of our Aboriginal Community to connect to family members, causing mental health issues.
- Reducing access to online services for the kids attending the Gascoyne Junction Remote Community School. Being remote they often have limited access to services and events that metropolitan based schools get.
- "Wonder out Yonder" has placed massive pressure on the poor Telecommunications infrastructure we have. Plus other infrastructure.
- The impact it has had on local businesses.

- When no coverage is available, no purchase of fuel is available. As the fuel is set up on an Eftpos payment system only.
- Local Government cannot function correctly to provide full services to the community.
- DBCA cannot function correctly to provide full services to the Region.
- Gascoyne Junction Remote Community School cannot function correctly to provide full services to the children of the community.
- Yingaarda Aboriginal Corporation cannot contact members of the Woodgemia Aboriginal Community to assist and serve them to their full extent.

Attempts to rectify the issue:

- Community members have contacted Telstra individually to raise a complaint.
- Community members have contacted the ombudsmen individually to raise a complaint.
- The Shire of Upper Gascoyne has attempted to make contact the Hon Paul Fletcher (Federal minister of Communications), the Hon Alannah Mactiernen (Minister for Regional Development; Agriculture and Food; Hydrogen Industry), Rosetta Sahanna (MEMBER FOR MINING AND PASTORAL). All to no avail.
- The Shire of Upper Gascoyne raised their concerns at the Local Emergency Management Committee meeting on 19th/08/2021. With the full support from DBCA, WAPOL, DFES and DWER.
- Requested [REDACTED] (DFES) to pen a letter on behalf of the Local Emergency Management Committee.
- Contacted [REDACTED], Maintenance Lead BY, North West Construction, Commercial Engineering, Networks and IT, Telstra, WA State ESLO, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to no avail.
- Contacted Telstra Country Wide, current complaint in action.
- Contacted [REDACTED], Regional General Manager WA, Telstra Retail & Regional, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] did not answer.

Every Telstra contact seem to all be of the same opinion. “they can’t do anything, they are limited by their position. We need to contact the Newspaper, or our local minister”

Kind regards,

Sean Walker
Town Maintenance Supervisor

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