

## **Regional Telecommunications Review - South East SA Public Consultation: Submission Geoffrey Hill**

To Hon Luke Hartsuyker (Chair), Ms Kristy Sparrow, Professor Hugh Bradlow, Mr Michael Cosgrave and Ms Sue Middleton, (Members) of the Regional Telecommunications Review - South East SA Public Consultation,

Dear Review Committee,

It was my honour and privilege to speak at the online South East SA Public Consultation forum on Thursday 05 August 2021, many thanks for allowing me with the opportunity to address a number of issues associated with my telecommunications. The purpose of this email is to follow up on your offer to make formal submissions to the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee. My submission is in essence the content of the issues I highlighted during my address to the public consultation.

I live at [REDACTED], Tantanoola SA 5280, a small property 15km on the highway South East of Millicent and 30km North West of Mt Gambier. My property adjoins the Tantanoola Conservation Park, a South Australian tourist attraction to the North-West and a major dolomite quarry to the South-East.

I work from home and use the internet for my work and personal uses which included email, data transfer and communications. My mobile telephone must remain with Telstra. I own and operate a light aircraft and Telstra is the only supplier that provides operational services to the national, regional and local aerodromes for flight planning, operational and safety support.

### **ISSUES**

**NBN:** My NBN is a satellite service supplied by iiNet via Sky Muster to this household. Our plan is the highest plan offered by iiNet for this service which provides capped data up to 60GB peak (07:00 – 01:00) and 190GB off-peak (01:00-07:00). During the COVID-19 period iiNet have offered an temporary increase of peak data up to 120GB. If these data caps are exceeded the service supply is shaped (reduced) to dial-up speeds. The service is subject to and may be lost during poor weather events. When the service is shaped or during weather events I have no useful internet services. It is common for me to travel to Millicent or Mt Gambier to regain and use reliable NBN. I find the iiNet response to any issues to be reasonable-to-good quality however there is no range of products in this region, I have a choice of one means of service delivery.

**Mobile Voice and Data:** This address and those either side, for several kilometres, are a Telstra black spot. Mobile service may be received by Optus for data at our house but to make and receive phone calls the caller has to leave the house and walk into an open region on the block. There is no Telstra service, nor a reliable service from any other provider at our address. To allow me to make Telstra mobile phone calls I use WIFI Calling through my internet, this is a poor quality solution and can only be used indoors. Most callers ask me to use another solution because the quality of the call is so poor. We have investigated the installation of an antenna to the home. This comes at a very high cost and no supplier will guarantee that the service will work and once again my mobile can only be used indoors, this solution may be not better than WIFI Calling.

**Landline:** As a result of the lack of mobile service (black spot) a landline has been installed. When first installed the service was a copper wire supply which turned out to be unreliable with constant failures and long wait times for reconnection. We were advised the failures were caused by animals eating insulation or pulling the cable or interfering in other ways. Telstra migrated the service to an NBN voice service, this has also proved to be unreliable with constant faults normally brought about by weather events. The service may be repaired and reconnected only to fail the following day, our experience is: we have the service for about a day and we wait two or more days for repair and reconnection, on one occasion we waited three weeks for reconnection. Telstra have advised they are going to return us to the copper wire service, I refer to our earlier issues with copper wire.

**Customer Service:** The 13 22 03 (Land Line faults) support line is called when ever we have a fault. The call centre has a very limited script and we are normally offered about 48hrs for resumption of service. It is common for resumption of service to exceed the 48hrs timeframe. When I have asked for a complaints phone number or to speak to a Manager we are offered a '1800' phone number to call, it is a promotions phone number which automatically hangs up after a pre-recorded message.

I submitted a report of the Black Spot in 2018 and I submitted a complaint recently about the interrupted landline service. I have received no feedback from either submission.

I submitted a complaint via the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) about our current and ongoing issues. Telstra Complaints Team responded by calling me directly. I asked if they had any record of my previous complaints, the team member had no record. During the Public Consultation event my landline had been out of service for six days following two periods of three day faults. I raised this with the Complaints Team and the resolution offered was to wait for the repairs to be carried out and see what happens. My landline was restored today making this a seven day fault. During the Public Consultation a participant (Telstra employee) said he would follow up and would contact me, I did not get his name so I cannot contact him but I have had no contact from Telstra to follow up.

The lack of reliable communications is more than a significant economic problem but a major safety issue. At my own address, the adjacent quarry, the Tantanoola Caves Conservation Park and other places; if an accident or sudden illness occurs there is no way to call for emergency assistance.

## **RESOLUTION**

**NBN:** Establish a land based solution (copper, fibre, wireless) throughout the local area and provide a target date for that to happen.

**Mobile Voice and Data:** Establish some means of eliminating the black spot along the Princes Hwy and in the town of Tantanoola.

**Customer Service:** the lack of customer service is unprofessional, unreasonable and fails to meet the minimum expectations of a customer service standard. Service providers must raised the standard and quality of their interaction with customers. After it is all said and done we are paying them for the service, they promise to provide the service and then fail to do so. This must fail to meet the minimum standards required for trade practices.

Given the condition of the local infrastructure, changing providers would not resolve the issues.

Once again I thank the Honourable Chair for allowing me to make this submission and I thank the Committee for listening and providing some feedback during the Public Consultation. Please accept this submission in good faith.

Respectfully Yours

Geoffrey Hill

