

**SUBMISSION BY THE RHYNIE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME (SA) TO THE 2021 REGIONAL  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDEPENDENT REVIEW COMMITTEE – 5/8/21**

**Introduction:**

For over the past 20 years the supply of telecommunications to the Clare and Gilbert Valleys District, in South Australia, has been **(poor)**. In recent times the supply has improved but is still, at best, unreliable.

The Clare and Gilbert Valleys District is located in South Australia between approximately 80 to 150 kilometers north of Adelaide. It is situated on both the Horrocks and Barrier Highways, which are primary connectors to the Flinders Ranges and Broken Hill respectively.

For this submission, my comments refer only to the township of Rhynie, which is situated on the Horrocks Highway, approximately 90 kms north of Adelaide. Rhynie has a population of about 150, that are mainly in the over 50's age group and mostly retired or semi- retired.

**Submission:**

For this submission I will break it into 3 categories; Landline, Mobile Phone, and Internet, over the past 20 years.

**Landline:**

Landline service has progressively declined over this period, as the provider has only undertaken minimal maintenance, and has encouraged users to switch to Mobile services. The problem is that for all of this period mobile service has been non- existent, or patchy and unreliable. For this reason, residents have needed to retain their landlines as their primary telecommunications supply, whilst at home.

**Mobile Phone:**

As stated above Mobile service has been, and still is, not available within the township. At best, it is patchy, and even then unreliable. Some residents have chosen to install Booster units in their houses, which considerably improves the service, but only within the confines of the house.

For many years Telstra denied that there was a service issue, but finally acknowledged that Rhynie was a “Black Spot”. In 2019 Rhynie was approved funding for a “Macrocell” under Round 4 of the Mobile Black Spot Program, but as yet has not been installed. In early 2019 we became aware that this funding was one of the few awarded to Optus, meaning that it would be an Optus only Tower, unless Telstra were to pay in order to also have their equipment on this tower. Since then we have lobbied both our State and Federal politicians that this is unviable for most of our residents. Living and working predominantly in regional areas, Telstra is the preferred choice of provider, having more coverage in regional areas than any of the others. To date this concern has been ignored, and to add insult to injury, we have yet to see any work commence on the tower. Our latest communication from Optus is that they do not expect work to commence until at least the second quarter of 2022. **THIS IS 2 & ½ YEARS SINCE THE FUNDING WAS APPROVED.** We consider this to not only be frustrating, but totally unacceptable.

Internet:

Several years ago, as part of the NBN rollout, a tower was erected just south of Rhynie, and we have since had wireless internet service. This service has overall been quite good, however, occasionally suffers from outages, that range from 1 hour to 24 hours and in a few instances several days. Whilst for the average resident this is inconvenient, but not critical, but for those working from home, and students studying at home, such outages are critical.

In summary, moving on from our submission to the 2018 Review, we have seen minimal improvement. For a region that is a Premium Wine and Tourist destination and a primary route to the Flinders Ranges and Broken Hill, this situation is frustrating and unacceptable.

Grant Hovey - (Chairman) Rhynie Improvement Scheme.

On behalf of the Rhynie Community