

Southport Community Centre

The volunteer Southport Community Centre Management Committee acts as an advisory and liaison body between those who may use the Centre and the Huon Valley Council. The Committee encourages public interest to promote the use of the Centre and to maximise its use and viability. The Centre's volunteer committee welcomes and supports community initiatives as well as producing a suite of programs to meet specific local needs and interests. From Dover onwards taking in Strathblane, Southport, Lune River, Lady Bay, Ida Bay and onwards to Cockle Creek the Southport Community Centre provides an essential community focus and node.

Part of our charter is to maintain the building infrastructure and ensure its long term viability for the community. This ranges from building maintenance and improvements to landscaping the grounds (for appeal and fire safety). We act as a gathering place after significant local emergencies. In the past the SCC has closely worked with and supported organisations such as the Far South History Group, the Far South Historical Society and Far South Regional Arts. Other community connections are with:

Dover District High School
Esperance Multi Purpose and Health Centre
Far South Regional Arts
Esperance Discovery Centre
Far South Tasmania Tourism Group
Southport Volunteer Fire Brigade
Yoga Group
Playgroup

1. What telecommunications services are required in regional Australia to meet current and future needs? Are there any things regional communities and businesses need to do, but can't, on their existing services?

Regional communities need to be able to do things that city communities are able to do and in some cases more so as they are physically unable to access resources on offer at the centres. Country people need to be able to study, work and enjoy cultural pursuits such as engaging with material held in public collections. We are not talking only about streaming movies (though a perfectly valid use of telecommunications when cinemas can be so far away) but participating in lectures, downloading software you might need to support your studies or allow someone in another place even country to repair software. In terms of work people may have to keep their licenses current through further education which may entail high level speed, upload and download speeds. On this note graphic designers may need these services to create, send and/or comment on work. Many of these examples are currently beyond the reach of our community.

Regions relying on the visitor economy struggle with the lack of reliable mobile and internet service. Expectations of travellers often don't meet what operators are able to offer.

A total lack of transparency around future network deployments affects consumers and businesses in regional and remote areas.

2. What changes in demand, barriers or challenges need to be addressed when it comes to telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Australia?

Faster speeds, more data, cheaper services. People who can install and fix.
Technology hubs as work and study spaces in very remote areas.

The patchiness of service is a big problem. Satellite NBN is often the only option in rural and remote areas. Even though the providers offer good service, it is expensive, data is very limited and once used the service gets shaped to an unusable 256kb download speed.

3. How have the Government's policies and programs affected telecommunications service outcomes in regional, rural and remote Australia? How can these be improved?

The current government politicised the NBN rollout and we ended up with a poorer service often reliant on access to towers or satellite. Good telecommunications are the rail lines of the 19th century--essential and transformative. Our own Centre (used as a place for information and refuge post emergency amongst other services) can only get satellite internet. This is too expensive for the committee to support. We would need an unlimited service otherwise the security required on passwords is impractical.

The government is subsidising individual commercial entities without being required to address the broader benefits to consumers. Often towers are located in unsuitable spots and only servicing a handful of potential customers. Where is the accountability by network providers for the government funded Mobile Blackspot Program?

4. How do service reliability issues impact on regional communities and businesses? How do outages, including in natural disasters, impact on communities and businesses?

When fires were raging in the far south of Tasmania we lost mobile phone coverage and often internet. We were completely isolated except for the odd landlines which are being removed as policy. It wasn't only a case of you had Optus but should have used Telstra. Towers are impacted by fire. They burn down but they also run down and need power back up.

A member of our community suffered a heart attack and aside from the length of time for emergency services to arrive when they did the telecommunication services added more delay. They were in a Telstra black spot so had to borrow a phone with an Optus carrier. When the internet became critical the ambulance had to drive around to find a Telstra service. The Tasmanian Health Department has advised it will all be solved when they roll out radio communications! Back to the future writ large.

Remote areas often experience power outages. In our area, mobile and internet towers do not have the necessary back up equipment (generators) and services go down within two hours of a power failure.

5. How might such impacts be addressed to ensure greater reliability? How can the network resilience be addressed in regional areas?

Open access to existing network. A minimum of 4G for all service providers. More transparency and quality information on network coverage. More accountability from network providers that are part of government funded programs.

6. How did the use of digital services change for regional consumers and businesses during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic? What insights for future service delivery does this provide?

Telephone health consults works very well

7. What can be done to improve the access and affordability of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Indigenous communities?

Allow open access to all network towers and share the infrastructure. We do not believe that this would not be commercially viable for network providers in the long term.

8. How can investment in telecommunications infrastructure work with other programs and policies to encourage economic development in regional Australia?

All economic programs must have an eye towards our emissions abatement and contributions towards curbing global warming. Telecommunications has to have specific goals, targets and investment in this arena.

9. What role could innovation, including new models, alternative investors or new ways of doing business, play to encourage investment in regional telecommunications infrastructure? What are the barriers?

Not answered

10. To what extent will new technologies enable significant change to the delivery of telecommunications services in regional Australia over the next 5-10 years? Are there any barriers to accessing these technologies?

Not answered

11. How can Government better support the rapid rollout of and investment in new telecommunications solutions in regional areas?

Not answered

12. How can different levels of Government, the telecommunications industry and regional communities better co-ordinate their efforts to improve telecommunications in regional Australia?

Not answered

13. What changes to Government investment programs are required to ensure they continue to be effective in delivering improved telecommunications? Not answered

14. How can regional consumers be better supported to identify, choose and use the best connectivity options for their circumstances, as well as to understand and use their consumer rights? Not answered

15. To what extent is public information on connectivity options, including predictive coverage data and speeds, sufficient to help regional customers make informed decisions? What other information is needed?

I don't want choice I want a good service and as far as I can tell competition doesn't necessarily deliver it as the essential infrastructure is shared. When one of our committee chose an NBN service they knew very little about it but constructed a checklist of reasonable questions and worked their way through it with potential services. Why wasn't that checklist provided? One of the questions was the location of customer service and those out of the country were deleted. None of us care whether a well trained and informed person from a non English speaking background IN AUSTRALIA is at the end of the line. We just wanted them to have an understanding of our cultural context and actual landscape.

16. What other matters should the Committee consider in its review and why are they important?