

My Telstra story of misery

Starting my business

I had numerous, distressing and costly issues getting a Telstra landline and internet connection when I started a business from home in 2017. I informed the Telstra business office that I was planning to leave a secure job in the city and commence operation from a home office in my own business.

I was told there would be no problems, but that it would take 6 weeks or so to connect me.

After waiting for technicians to attend my property on 3 occasions with no show, I was told that no connection was available. By this time, I had resigned from my previous job. You can imagine how I felt.

It was only after contacting my local MP (Mr Leeser) that something was finally done, many months later. I suffered substantial losses but was not entitled to compensation from Telstra because my business was in start-up.

Though finally connected with a landline and internet, both were of miserable quality, with internet speeds of less than 1Mbps and a landline that made phone discussions barely audible. That endured until the NBN was connected this year, but even since that time, internet speeds have been low – less than 10Mbps on many occasions.

Multiple issues with telecommunications:

- Mobile phone coverage in my area is atrocious. I am lucky to get one reception bar. Calls drop out frequently. I have to leave my office and go outside to receive or make a call, which is not fun when it is pouring with rain. Often, I cannot use my mobile phone at all, as calls regularly “fail”. Even when it does work, I often have to call several times to make one call.
- On one occasion, when trying to speak with Telstra itself (about an extended internet outage) the call dropped out 4 times. When I have an important call to make by my mobile phone – ie, when the landline is down and I have no other choice - I often have to get in my car and drive to a place where mobile coverage is better.
- My property is on the North-western edge of Sydney and so, when fires or other natural disasters threaten us, as was the case in 2020, the disgraceful mobile coverage will magnify the danger, since we may be unable to contact family, neighbours or emergency services.
- Landline quality is atrocious, though better than mobile reception. There is so much “white noise” that callers often say I sound like I am underwater.
- Even since the NBN was connected, my landline drops out regularly.

- Despite NBN connection, internet speeds are often less than 10Mbps.
- I am also a part time teacher with TAFE NSW. During covid-19, delivering virtual classes to my students from home has, on many occasions, been hopeless. The virtual connection (by Zoom or Teams) has been unstable and students complain that there is lag and poor sound and video quality. I have “dropped out” of several classes on many occasions and my students have to wait patiently while I try to log back on.
- My wife is also a NSW Govt Primary School teacher at a local school. COVID-19 has required her to teach on-line as well. Unstable internet and poor speeds have continued to plague her and her students.
- My teenage daughters at high school and university are obliged to do on-line research for and submit assignments by email. They have often been unable to do that from here and sometimes have been forced to go to a friend’s house where the connection is better. That of course cannot happen now while covid-lockdowns are in force.
- On many, many occasions, the internet and phone connections have been cut altogether, in many instances for weeks at a time. Almost every time we have any decent rain, phone and internet are lost. When connection is lost, it takes endless, frustrating, mobile phone calls to Telstra to find out when services may be restored. In *every case* it has taken an unacceptably long time to fix and the time estimates given by Telstra are always massively exceeded.
- On one occasion I, and many in my area, were without phone and internet for more than 6 weeks. I was told on several occasions that Telstra was waiting for a cable to be supplied. After numerous further calls, I was finally told by one Telstra representative that NBN Co had cut the line! If it was a cut cable – for a company whose core business is to provide services by cable, how could it take so long to reconnect us?

Again, it was only the intervention of Mr Leeser's office that managed to get anything happening. After I was finally re-connected, and only after again escalating my issues through you, I was offered \$500 compensation as a credit against future phone bills – they would never actually pay you cash! Disgraceful! Utterly insulting!

- Communicating with Telstra itself is a nightmare. You wait and wait, sometimes 30 minutes, 40 minutes or on some occasions for more than an hour. You have to go put up with its tedious, dishonest and patronising patter about how they “care and want to send you to the right part of Telstra”. As often as not, when you finally get to speak to someone, you then get bumped to a different section or person and have to wait again and endlessly repeat your ID details and the problems you are having. Recently, I was asked my name and other ID details, and had to explain my reason for calling, four times in one call. Further, Telstra's use of overseas call centres (no doubt to save money and increase profits) means that, very often, the heavily accented person you end up speaking to is very hard to understand.
- It is more than obvious to me, that Telstra could not care less about any of this. The rude and dismissive reply of the Telstra CEO, to a letter sent by Mr Leeser, is proof of this.

Telstra will not spend a farthing on updating or improving our services - or fixing them when they are broken. I am convinced that this is because the population density here makes it less profitable for them to do so. *Yet we live only 42 kilometres from the GPO in Martin Place of Sydney, the biggest city in Australia.* We are paying full freight for services that are often non-existent and always utterly sub-standard.

- Corrective action has only ever been taken when a complaint had been made through our local member, Mr Leeser. It should not be necessary to contact a Federal MP to get an essential public telecom service-provider to act. I Understand that for some time, Mr Leeser has had a dedicated staff member just to respond to and assist Berowra constituents to get a response from Telstra. While I am most grateful for Mr Leeser's support, his need to dedicate staff to that issue is a shocking and shameful waste of public resources. Again, thank you Telstra!
- I have no other words than to describe Telstra as a demonstrably arrogant, bureaucratic, corporate monster that cannot be trusted at any time on any issue. It has absolutely no conscience where its services to Berowra are concerned. It makes frequent promises and says “we are sorry” a lot, but it never keeps those promises and simply cannot be trusted. It is hard to believe that its disgraceful performance in Berowra is due to incompetence. While I am certain that incompetence is sometimes in play, for the most part, I am convinced that Telstra's disgraceful service here is purely a question of profit and it just does not give two hoots about us.
- No-one I have ever met has anything positive – at all – to say about Telstra. The problem is, we have no other choice. So many businesses and families here suffer at the hands of this disgraceful company. Our losses are, of course, felt financially and in huge amounts of lost time – but I also have no doubt, that “Telstra-stress” is causing health problems for many. The level of distrust, anger, and frustration is well beyond boiling point for many, nay, most, in this electorate.