

To whom it may concern,

Thankyou for the opportunity to hear our views on using telecommunications in our area here at Canna.

We are located 165km east of Geraldton at Canna WA. We are broadacre cereal producers and also we lease and own land in the chittering shire at Bindoon where we operate a cattle and hay business.

We recently were contacted by the head of Chamber of Commerce in Geraldton [REDACTED] and also the ABC regarding telecommunications or lack thereof within our area here at Canna. I thought it necessary to also communicate with you our experience and views on the current telecommunications in our region.

As a farming business we rely on good Telstra signal to complete much of our business out in the paddock and until recently relied on Telstra for our home internet. We have recently upgraded our internet provider to an external fixed wireless NBN Provider Node 1 who has a tower 16km away from our house. This has significantly improved efficiencies for us here at the homestead as it has allowed me to operate my paperless office well without having to wait for slow download speeds and the intermittent signal I was relying on prior to the upgrade. In July I lodged my BAS online as I always do only to discover in August, just before it was actually due, that it had not lodged even though I had the lodgement number on file. I put it solely down to the intermittent and in and out of signal we were experiencing at the homestead.

I did have a Telstra booster installed some years back for the home internet which cost the business \$1400 at the time which provided more bars but of course been the 3G still very slow download speeds. For my monthly allowance for many years with Telstra I would not even reach 25% of my MB plan allocation-as I just had so much trouble downloading things on my home computer that I would give up and wait till I was either in town or closer to the city to download on my mobile devices and save to my onedrive then.

At Canna we are relying on a very dated 3G system which is just not up to standard when we are running tech savvy farming businesses. We want to implement new technologies on our farms and utilise new apps however how are we meant to do so when we have such slow download speeds? Signal from the 3G system needs urgent upgrading. I believe something may be in the pipeline next year but this upgrade needs to happen now not in another 6 months. I think this will be a large factor of rural population decline if people are not able to access good telecommunications for their ever changing farm businesses. It is not a decision we will make by choice but will be one that is made for us if telecommunications do not improve in some of these areas.

I adopted a paperless system 3 years ago so that I would be able to access my Onedrive folder from where ever I am when ever I require my files. Excellent system when we have good download speeds and signal. Very frustrating when we do not. This proves very difficult on a dated 3G system. In addition even when I enter a 4G area such as when I drive into the local town I still have trouble downloading any PDF within my Onedrive even though there is full bars and signal on my mobile devices. Therefore I believe that even the 4G system may have limitations for our business going forward even if the Canna tower is upgraded to the 4 generation system.

Canna is a hot spot for tourism during wildflower season and we have noticed that signal/service and download speeds during the past few months have been particularly bad.

In the lead up to Harvest I am very anxious about how the 3G system will hold up and be suffice for our ever changing businesses which rely on various apps including Daily grain marketing, CBH truck deliveries/CDF completion. It is costing our businesses significantly.

First and foremost though is on farm Safety. There are very few people who now have landlines at their homesteads and therefore we rely solely on mobile devices. For us we are located 50km from the closest medical facility and with 4 young children and up for 4 seasonal staff and low mobile signal across alot of the farm I would be very concerned if we need to make a call to emergency services at such a time. In particular with newly introduced legislative safety laws which cover our farm practices we need to be extra vigilant to ensure that family, friends, visitors, employees and contractors are safe at all times. I do not believe that Telstra are providing us with the telecommunication resources which allow us to provide a safe working environment for our staff at all times..

I hope by writing to you that you are able to place our thoughts to the Regional Telecommunications Review to get a picture of where we are as business owners and the daily frustrations we face due to an outdated telecommunications system we are currently relying on.

Thankyou for your time in reading and I look forward to hearing about the outcomes and most importantly actions from this review.

Kind Regards,
Betty-Lou Haydon
Canna

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