

2021 Regional Telecommunications Review Secretariat
Department of Infrastructure, Transport,
Regional Development and Communications
GPO Box 594
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Email: secretariat@rtirc.gov.au

27th September 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Warren Shire Council Submission on the Regional Telecommunications Review 2021

Warren Shire Local Government Area is the fifth largest agricultural producing Shire in New South Wales. The area is known as the 'Wool and Cotton Capital'.

Telecommunications is suppose to play a key role in supporting the productivity and well being of regional, rural and remote Australia.

However, if you drive 7 kms out of the main town of Warren without an expensive booster system on your motor vehicle, your smart phone does not work. If you travel to have a meal at the Village of Nevertire or the other Village of Collie, your Telstra connected mobile phone does not work or you may find for a fleeting moment one bar of five and not have much of a conversation. On the farms in between or as you follow the Macquarie River within Warren Shire, there is not much mobile telephone coverage.

This situation is in a community that is only 120 kms by road from the major regional centre of Dubbo, only 500 kms from Sydney. It would be suggested that at least 50% or more of the 11,000 kms² Warren Shire Local Government Area is a mobile telephone black spot in the year 2021.

The community, both residents and business have been affected by poor telecommunications within the Warren Shire, even with two major highways being the Mitchell and Oxley Highways traversing the area.

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Council for many years has written to all concerned advising of the lack of mobile telephone coverage within the Warren Shire Local Government Area particularly on the Mitchell Highway, the Oxley Highway, Nevertire, Collie, the local used back road to Dubbo via the Wambianna Road (Gin Gin area) and the Mullengudgery Area on the boundary with Bogan Shire.

Many of us can remember the analogue era when the mobile telephone coverage using CDMA telephones provided almost a 100% coverage of the Warren Shire Local Government Area. The digital age came along and we lost most of the mobile telephone coverage.

Over time, the Warren Shire where mobile telephone service is available, has been known as a 'Telstra' Shire. However, positive responses from Telstra lately to requests to improve the service have been mute.

Council is aware that a firm called Field Solutions Group is in the process of developing telecommunication towers at Nevertire, Mullengudgery and Gin Gin areas for fixed wireless internet. Field Solutions Group have offered both Optus and Telstra the opportunity to install their mobile phone equipment on these proposed towers. At this stage Optus have taken up the offer under the Mobile Phone Black Spot Round 5 Program, but no response has been realised from Telstra.

This is an opportunity for Telstra to improve its mobile phone coverage a great deal within the Warren Shire Local Government Area and would benefit the community, businesses and emergency services. Representations have been made to Telstra however, again the lack of action is most concerning.

The question today now has to be posed, is that with Telstra in particular not showing much interest in participating in the Mobile Black Spot Program and there still being a need for Telstra to provide an appropriate telecommunications service to regional, rural and remote areas of Australia in accordance with legislation that this legislation should be used to force Telstra and other major telecommunication carriers to provide the same mobile telephone service that is being provided to our big city counterparts. This before it is too late and the requirements of the Legislation no longer are applicable.

In regard to the future and emerging technologies, Council has become aware of the ability of carrier neutral infrastructure where multiple carriers can use the same infrastructure. This may be a more beneficial solution for rural and remote Australian telecommunications. Council would appreciate if the Commonwealth Government would undertake an investigation of this type of infrastructure to determine if this could be an option for future Mobile Black Spot Programs to give the community more choice of carrier without changing carrier and all carriers will save infrastructure costs.

Warren Shire like all other rural communities, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic would like to attract city dwellers who are looking for a tree change and a different style of living. However those same people will require the same type and level of services that they are currently receiving


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in the larger cities of Australia i.e. health, education (under the gambit of the State Government), facilities such as roads, water, sewer, parks, gardens, sporting facilities, waste etc (all under the gambit of Local Government) and of course telecommunications which Council believes is a Commonwealth Government responsibility. The financial pressures of typical Local Government infrastructure and services will never allow a Council like Warren Shire Council to contribute to telecommunication facilities. These costs have to be borne by higher levels of government on behalf of the whole community.

Sadly, the picture of the farmer using his laptop in his paddock that fronts the Regional Telecommunications Review 2021 Issues Paper is not a reality for a majority of persons in the Warren Shire Local Government Area, however it should be a goal for your review and the Commonwealth Government.

Yours faithfully,



Gary Woodman
General Manager