



Bringing the community together

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The Hon Luke Hartsuyker
2021 Regional Telecommunications Review Chair
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
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Submission to the Regional Telecommunications Review

Dear Panel,

The Eungella Community Development Association is pleased to provide a formal submission to the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review.

We thank you for the opportunity to outline the connectivity issues our communities face and to suggest solutions for the Review's consideration.

The current service provisions for telecommunications within the district are poor and substantially limited. Businesses and private residents constantly have to rely on these ineffective services to complete their day-to-day activities and are greatly disadvantaged in comparison to the larger regional centres.

Current Issues include:

- Landline services are greatly affected by an ailing copper network with amenity often impacted by substantial background noise (Too much to hold a conversation), and frequent outages (Particularly around wet weather), which require regular service calls for repairs. The service has been so bad for some residents they have opted to cancel it altogether.
- Cellular mobile service is restricted to Eungella Township and limited intermittent locations in the local regions. Majority of areas have no coverage at all.
- Some residents have opted for wireless calling through the NBN (satellite) however these services are plagued by regular lag times, delays and dropouts making it difficult to hold conversations and discussions.
- Internet services (NBN) are also very limited. Fixed wireless is restricted to Eungella township while coverage in local regional areas is next to non-existent. (Limited coverage to Crediton area.)

Majority of people rely on Satellite providers. Satellite services are restricted to limited data transfers and higher costs plans than are available in larger regional centres. (Recent unlimited data plans for non-streaming content have had limited success as generally most websites accessed have automatic streaming content. This generally means that most users use full allocations within the period allowed.)

Our communities are greatly concerned with the current impacts as a result of limited-service connectivity to our business and residents. They are also concerned that this will be further exacerbated as the general economy and government services etc continue to move to digitally based systems.

Principle Community Concerns:

- Emergency and Incident Response impacts.
- Safety of school busses in roads without service.
- Limited access to online health services
- Covid19 Compliance impacts
- General Business impacts
- General Connectivity for local residents and tourists.
- Potential additional demands exacerbating current issues from planned major projects (Mackay Mountain Bike Project)

In addition there is also concern that service provision has not been properly assessed for our community and that the decisions for the location of the existing towers and infrastructure are based on service provision for other areas (Back-Haul Links) and not for services to local districts.

We appreciate that our region is geographically challenged however there are many tower installations within the district that have the potential to be better utilised to achieve substantial service increases.

The community has also discussed potential for a Community Grant Funded partnership to construct additional infrastructure if required.

Queensland councils have also passed a range of resolutions for the Local Government Association of Queensland to action on our behalf to improve connectivity. These include calling for mobile roaming to be legislated to allow consumers access to available networks throughout regional remote areas, and ensuring the blackspot program prioritises improving coverage of non-commercially viable mobile blackspots. We would also like to reiterate our support for those resolutions.

It is important the local government is given the opportunity to provide the Review with a local understanding of how better digital connectivity would provide greater opportunity and overcome barriers for those living, working and raising a family in regional, rural and remote Queensland, and we thank you again for providing us with the opportunity to do this via our submission and stand ready to actively engage and assist in any measure possible to achieve this outcome.

Sincerely



Dr Beryl Turner
President Eungella Community Development Association



I give permission for this submission to be made public.