

Telecommunication Review 2021 - Submission

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Accounts Held with Telstra include:

- 2 mobiles
- Internet – Galaxy Tablet
- Home Line

While we have never had the internet coverage that customers receive in a city, we did have coverage that would see us able to function as a business.

It took us 2 years of constant emails and telephone calls to finally get a result with Telstra. While we still have issues with our service, it is better than it was, yet we still experience drop out calls and extremely slow downloads.

Telecommunications Services

Most regional towns cannot do the basics with the current existing services. Telecommunication services need to be looked into very carefully and make regional towns a priority.

Changes in demand

- Our business has seen us rely on telecommunication double. Mobiles mean that we can access the vet in the paddock with the sick or injured animal if needed and treatment can be delivered first hand. Clients can contact us and make appointments to buy stud rams during business hours and we can receive calls from our stock and station agents with details of sales etc.
- Changes in how we pay our bills, our staff or send and receive work related documents, means that we rely very heavily on efficient internet. We use the internet to complete and send our bookwork to our accountant and the ATO. e.g., Business Activity Statement, Single Touch Payroll using MYOB. Online banking, all staff are paid by direct debit.
- COVID 19 has played a major impact on our use of the internet, although in our case the problems we have had were before COVID. We now have Zoom meetings instead of face-to-face meetings. Audits have to be completed remotely, online. That means uploading large files to complete the audits, as well as photographs

Issues with placement of towers

One issue that needs to be addressed is the placement of towers by Telecommunications authority. One tower that needs to be looked into and addressed is the Telstra tower that was erected in the small community of Windeyer, 36km south west from Mudgee NSW. The tower was erected on the flattest position, therefore only allowing mobile coverage for a very short distance/coverage and limited customers. Yet there are many accessible hills that it could have been built on which would have ensured much wider coverage. These little towns rely on telecommunication just like major cities and it is very important, especially with COVID, that placement of towers should be the number one priority.

Public Information

Most information is sent out via social media or through the internet. Therefore, how are customers to know what is available and what they can apply for, if they do not have access to a reliable internet.

Other Matters

- With COVID impacting our lives and how we holiday or relax, small country towns are top of peoples list to visit and holiday. There needs to be a major overhaul so that the small businesses in these towns can keep up to date with the Health Department requirements, such as being able to set up QR codes for visitors and locals alike to “sign in”.
- Small country businesses need to be able to use Eftpos, as part of their business. just like in major towns. Without good coverage/service this is impossible and very frustrating.
- Social media plays a major part in promotion for any business, small locally run businesses are no exception and they need to advertise their products too. Without efficient internet coverage this is impossible.
- With many people working from home, also due to COVID, services need to be upgraded to cope with that.
- Students in country towns have to be able to access remote learning as well. This is not something that should be dismissed.
- Most country roads are also very lonely and isolated, therefore if there is an accident, or a bushfire, someone breaks down or has a medical episode, there needs to be the mobile coverage to access emergency services.

How all these changes can be implanted is something that needs to be looked at very carefully. Whatever changes are implanted, regional NSW should be a priority. Increasing their charges is not the answer.

