

To our valued committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns about regional telecommunications.

I must say that I would have liked to have instigated some review earlier than the final day for submissions but I only came across this on a social media platform this last weekend. I would like to highlight some of the issues my family and I face - personally as well as professionally - and indeed summarize what many of my farming clients deal with as well.

A little background to begin with - I am an independent agronomist based in the Central Wheatbelt of WA. I service a number of farming family clients and Reseller organizations for their agronomic services. Furthermore, I live on the shire boundary between Beverley and Brookton, near Dale - west of Kokeby. I have always tried to keep touch with new technology, and am constantly searching for the marriage between agriculture and technology. Most marriages have rocky times, and we've certainly taken a few knocks along the way!! Like many clients would allude, our mobile telephone service seemed a lot better back in the days of CDMA...

Firstly, from a family perspective. When we first had relocated to our current residence, the only way you could access the Internet was to attempt mobile connection. There was a very poor satellite connection which obviously has gotten better since the advent of NBN. However, we spent a little under \$1500 back then on a booster and YAGI antenna, to have pretty poor connection to the internet, and it was very expensive. What this meant was that several educational apps we had subscribed to when we lived in York and had ADSL were effectively unavailable. It also rendered facilities like virtual GP contact redundant.

This has improved since the NBN but the service is expensive for the limited traffic we're allowed, and video will often have to be turned off in order to maintain some integrity with Zoom, or Teams and the platforms the School for Isolated and Distance Education use...when schools were shut at the onset of the Covid pandemic last year, this certainly hampered us in a very different way to our urban counterparts. Similarly my son had just started uni with ECU, and that was similarly impacted. Whilst this is undoubtedly an NBN issue primarily, the fact is we have no choice afforded to us by a reliable mobile connection.

Professionally, where do I begin? I've been through 3 different car kit and boosters, and we've seen the reopening of certain 'black hole' areas, despite having them covered 4-7 years ago!! The mobile telemetry access and integrity has certainly diminished in the last 3 years or so and certainly in the last 18 months we now get more spam sms from all sorts of phishing and yellow political parties than before the mandatory signing for Covid tracing. Often you can be standing in a regional town like York or Merredin - (so not little places, like Narambeen perhaps?) and have calls drop out after 30-90seconds. This excludes times you may be trying to have a conversation whilst mobile...this is just attempting the BASIC service of a telephone call. The constant switch between 3G and 4G is what is constantly blamed when you raise a complaint with Telstra - realistically we are not cared with the semantics of why, if that is identified as an issue, why is not being addressed?

In terms of opportunity costs where it comes to access to the internet, I shudder to think the waste of man hours waiting for the loading of a simple page that doesn't have videos imbedded and the like...this is app based, or nowadays API links provided by certain businesses who are fed up with having to try and update an app to cater for every platform change or iOS Band Aid patches. Everyone is aware that most business is attempting to be conducted on these little \$1500 computers in our pocket, yet it is probably only 60% efficient in my opinion...there are still countless transactions that get done in the evening or early morning at home.

In terms of holistic connectivity, we are on the brink - and in some cases, already dabbling - with the Internet of Things. Indeed a lot of our new equipment on farm has capability for connectivity with IOT. Many growers and advisers like myself are looking forward to the efficiencies that this can provide – but it cannot operate without effective telemetry to the machine and that is still very obviously lacking on most of the properties where I work.

It is encouraging quite how far we have come when you stop and think just about exactly that. However there are several promises that are not delivered and a lot of wasted opportunity so far. I can only hope that the next roll out will be implemented better, and indeed keep eyes scanning not just on a future proofing, but what current requirements are too.

I'm happy to chat further if required and would gladly alight our trials and burdens to any operator who truly wishes to advance their - and OUR - businesses into the future.

Thanks once again and I wish you all the best. Cheers for now,

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Sent from my iPhone [REDACTED]