

September 27 2021

2021 Regional Review Telecommunications Secretariat

Dept of Infrastructure, Regional Development, Communications

GPO Box 594

CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Committee Members,

Please find the enclosed submission citing my extremely frustrating experience lasting many weeks earlier this year. As you will see, I had to go right to the top at Telstra to achieve an outcome.

The enclosed correspondence speaks for itself.

Yours sincerely



Charles R Wilson




Mr Andrew Penn

CEO, Telstra

Locked Bag 5639

Melbourne, VIC 3001

January 5 2021

Telstra acct number: 

Dear Mr Penn,

My wife and I live on a rural property 17km south of Oberon, in the NSW Central West. We rely solely on our landline because the property is totally lacking mobile reception.

Approximately three weeks ago the landline was knocked out by a lightning strike. I immediately called your 132203 number. Over the next several days, three long and frustrating and ineffectual conversations took place with your Mumbai call centre seeking a technician (calling from our nearest reception spot - standing in the middle of a dirt country road a mile from the property). During the course of these conversations, a proposed visit from a technician was rescheduled three times.

A technician eventually arrived on December 21, having travelled from Cowra, a two and half hour drive away. He reconnected the landline but the handset, in the lightning strike, had lost all its features, most importantly its Message Bank service. As a result, callers leave messages which we are unable to access. Callers then become concerned when their calls are not returned. The matter of a replacement totally-operation handset remains unresolved.

On December 30 I responded to a Telstra feedback survey email from a Mr Michael Ackland and explained the situation to him in frank terms, much as expressed here. The last page of this feedback document consisted of several phone numbers to call for assistance. The only one of relevance was that leading back to your Mumbia call centre! At this point I had come full circle.

To date there has been no response from Mr Ackland or anyone else at Telstra.

Meanwhile my wife simultaneously sought some resolution through your Virtual Assistant service. In the course of email messaging she was passed on through a succession of five communicants (some of them more than once). Some of these were automated responses and some were individuals who texted their messages. At no time was there any actual human contact. The final message in this sequence, spanning almost two hours, was another automated message from the original voice responder, at which point my wife - like myself having come circle - gave up in frustration.

This has been a stressful, time-consuming and frustrating episode which is still without resolution and reflects badly on Telstra's operational efficiency; . For an organisation whose business is communication, your own communication methods are appalling, and for a rural remote client, appalling.

All we seek is the installation of a fully operational replacement TCG302 handset as soon as possible, and the service we pay for.

Please note that we also have priority assistance status.

In another operational-related matter, I understand that Telstra has in recent reduced your technician complement based in Bathurst. This seems a rather surprising decision, considering the current social confusion over the past year as a consequence of the Covid-29 pandemic.

One aspect of this uncertainty has been a discernible exodus of metropolitan dwellers into regional areas. In the latest available Australian Bureau of Statistics data, for the June 2020 quarter, there was a net loss of 10,500 people from major capital cities through internal migration. It is more than reasonable to assume that figures in the two quarters since then have risen considerably

as the Covid crisis has developed. Projected regional population growth figures will therefore be significantly under-estimated.

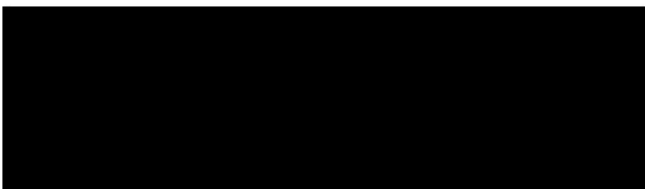
An example of this is in the NSW Central West, because of its proximity to Sydney - with Oberon and Bathurst very much part of that increased interest among city treechangers.

This social shift is also highlighted by the REA Group, in November, stating that in the previous the Central West had seen the largest increase of any area region in Australia for views by possible buyers of real estate listings, an increase of 93 per cent. Unit prices in Orange jumped by 30 per cent during that period. Orange is also said to be the fastest-growing country town in NSW.

This is a time when, with all the indications pointing to a burgeoning future, Telstra customers in the NSW Central West are going to need more technical support and infrastructure, not less.

Yours sincerely

Charles R Wilson



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Subject [REDACTED]
From [REDACTED]
To [REDACTED]
Date 2021-02-03 15:40

Mr [REDACTED]
Many thanks for your response of Jan 28. My landline has now been restored and is fully operational. Coincidentally, minutes after receiving your email I read the new story in which you announced the transfer of Telstra's call centres back to Australia within the next 18 months. Welcome news.
During my recent difficulties I made three assistance request calls, and on each occasion ended up speaking with someone in Mumbai, who no matter how helpful, would have no comprehension of the fact that I was having to call from the middle of a country dirt road just over the Blue Mountains. In future, speaking with a call centre employee in Sydney, Melbourne, or even the back of Woopwoop, will give customers a greater sense of confidence and the sense that there is a greater appreciation of their circumstances.
yours sincerely
Charles Wilson

-28 12:17, [REDACTED] wrote:
Charles

Thank you for your letter and I am sorry for the frustration and inconvenience we caused you.

A member of my personal support team will reach out and assist you with your handset replacement.

I have sought guidance on the technician situation in Bathurst. Our field technician workforce in the Bathurst area has not seen any significant changes over the past 12 months. Nationally, we are seeing the transition to the NBN having some impacts across our field teams, but importantly we review requirements based on area demand, ensuring we have adequate teams in all areas available to manage customer and community requirements. Additionally, in unusual circumstances like natural disasters, we re-deploy teams from other areas and states as required to minimise any interruption to our customers services.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

E [REDACTED]@team.telstra.com

W www.telstra.com [1]

This email may contain confidential information.
If I've sent it to you by accident, please delete it immediately

Links:

[1] <http://www.telstra.com/>