

2021 REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

To:

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

I have no specific issues regarding Regional Telecommunications other than potential consequences that, in my opinion, are not being considered seriously.

Question 1.

In general, regional areas are agriculture businesses with increasing farm automation and a need for reliable continuous real-time data communications across the paddocks. To reduce the opportunity for cybercrime, such specific commercial use could perhaps function with limited on-line internet capability.

Question 3.

There is a growing tendency for Government Depts. and businesses to expect near-instant response to digital communication (e.g. web sites and emails). Regional work is often not centred on digital devices and such expectation is not appropriate, irrespective of the regions' telecommunication systems.

Question 5.

In the quest to provide fast fibre and replace copper, the reliable exchange power for land line devices was replaced by household power. In rural areas this is a major problem as loss of local power also prevents communication, even when the fibre cable remains intact.

In regional and remote areas, modems could be powered by an Uninterrupted Power Supply. Or, where the copper extends to a property, by a limited capacity power source within the cabinet that is fibre connected to the exchange. Either solution would enable limited communication during a local area disaster.

Question 6.

There was no change to our household telecommunications as a result of COVID-19. Relied solely on the 6 pm TV news service. References to additional health information on various web sites was useless for us as our daily activities keep us too busy to monitor a screen with an obsolete device. Perhaps a well supported dedicated emergency radio frequency is sufficient for regional areas.

Question 7.

For several years, we had a mobile phone linked to our land line phone account. The Telco changed our plan and the mobile needed to be prepaid (\$30 minimum, that expired in six months if unused). By then, my near relations and most friends had died, so our mobile use was minimal. Occasionally the phone could have been useful but the prepaid had often expired and any earlier calls were extremely expensive. Without a suitable low-use, non-expiry phone plan we have no interest in a "smart phone" replacement.

Question 11.

Government support for rapid rollout of new telecommunications should, in my opinion, be constrained until the downsides are fully identified and avoided. Too many security issues have been ignored, especially where home devices are involved. Internet banking, on-line shopping, video/music downloads and social media are hardly praise for worthwhile accomplishments when cybercrime is included.

Lastly, digital devices have reduced face to face communications, caused a loss of social ability and seemingly contributed to the younger generation "mental health". Continue to advance the business to business capabilities where there are deep pockets but limit community involvement until digital has become a safe environment for poorly maintained personnel devices.