



Regional Telecommunications Review- 2018

**2018 Regional Review Secretariat
Dept of Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601**

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the face to face meeting held on 26 June 2018 in Clare South Australia.

I felt the meeting was an excellent opportunity to discuss the issues facing rural communities and the challenges many face with communications that are often inadequate or poorly maintained.

I am a resident of Mintaro in South Australia and a retired communications engineer. I have worked for over 30 years for Telstra and more recently was employed by the SA Country Fire Service as a Community Engagement Officer. I also am a member of a the CFS State Incident Management Team as a Public Information Officer and this involves the use of internet and social media to inform the public of bushfire status and issue warning messages. Reliable communications is critical to the management of large bushfires and ensuring public safety.

I have attached some notes of issues I have experienced,

Your Sincerely,



Rod Cunningham

2/8/18

Mintaro is a small rural township of approximately 120 residents and a further 80+ on surrounding farms in the Mid-North of South Australia. The largest employer has a staff of 20-25 and processes medical products (anti-venene) using sheep. Another nearby employer has 20 staff employed in intensive agriculture and cropping.

Mintaro's communications are provided by a telephone exchange equipped with ADSL for about 25 customers, a 3G mobile tower on nearby Mt Rufus and a recently installed (black spot) 4G VoLTE small cell on the local telephone exchange. There is limited coverage from Aussie Broadband and a very weak Optus mobile signal.

My comments are-

1. **Small Cells-** Stop wasting money on small cell technology, it will only work on a few handsets, has limited coverage (200-300m) and because the signal drops in and out it causes problems and dropouts with signals from the local Telstra 3G tower. Its simply a marketing ploy by Telstra and provides very limited local benefit.
2. **Service restoration** times in the country are terrible due to-
 - lack of suitable staff
 - lack of spares and long delivery times
 - poor co-ordination of fault restoration
 - overseas operators refusing to accept fault reports and blaming outages on non-existent upgrade work.

Outages have included –Vandalism to the local Telstra mobile tower (on Friday 19 Jan 2018)- It took 9 days to repair and many calls to Mark Bolton the Telstra Manager to expedite restoration. Many businesses were affected and during the peak of summer the tower is widely used for bushfire information and fire calls to CFS members. Refer local press release- Attachment B

Storms on 28-29 September 2016 caused widespread power outages in South Australia. The Mintaro exchange and mobile tower were not operating for 6 days. Calls could not be made to emergency services on triple zero and Telstra were unwilling to accept or even acknowledge fault reports. Refer letter to Telstra State Manager Mark Bolton- Attachment A.

There is a lack of understanding of the realities of life shown by Telstra operators to country people. They seem to think if you go down the road there is another tower. There is no attempt to prioritise restoration if a town is isolated with both its exchange and mobile tower inoperative.

3. **Poor information on outages and restoration times** add to the ongoing difficulties. Telstra advise you should check for outage information on their 24/7 facebook page.

Electricity companies provide better location based information and restoration times and communication providers should consider these options.

4. **Communications vulnerability.** Communities rely heavily on communications during severe weather, flood and bushfire events for warnings and safety. Access to triple zero is critical to call emergency services to request assistance.

In the week of the Pinery bush fires (November 2015) there were 18 million hits or transactions on sites provided by the South Australian Country Fire Service to the web, facebook, twitter, email services operated by the CFS. It illustrates the demand for information in times of bushfire. Fortunately only several communication sites received bushfire damage in the Pinery fire. However, the maintenance of mobile communication sites by Telstra and Optus is haphazard and poor. High levels of vegetation around buildings, towers and cables places communications at these sites at risk and vulnerable to fire damage. It is critical that communications sites have a high survivability. The loss of communications facilities affects both community warnings, personal safety and hinders bushfire recovery. Communications providers must do more to harden their sites and critical facilities against bushfire and flood. Refer Attachment C for two examples of communication towers.

5. **Insufficient capacity and data speeds.** Mintaro's ADSL, the local Telstra 3G tower all suffer from back-haul limitations. The grade of service and data speeds in Mintaro can drop up to 80% or more during peak use (from 4pm to 10pm). Telstra and the Ombudsman will not accept congestion complaints and the speed drop seems to be accepted as a normal event. Refer Attachment D- Speed tests on our ADSL service which normally downloads at 13Mbps.



Rod Cunningham



2/8/18

Attachment A.

Rod Cunningham

Mark Bolton, Area General Manager,
Telstra Country Wide
2 Sturt Reserve Drive, Murray Bridge SA 5253

Dear Mark,

I understand your role is to assist rural communities through the challenges often unique to country residents. On Wednesday 28 September a statewide blackout affected South Australia. Our township, Mintaro, in the mid north of South Australia was also experiencing strong winds, flooding, property damage and many trees blocking roadways.

On Thursday morning our mobile tower near Mt Rufus (Telstra Site ID 132783) failed and also the local telephone exchange here in the Mintaro township. There was no access to 000 and a number of people with flooding and tree issues called at homes of Country Fire Service members to report problems and request assistance.

On Saturday, as the landline outages were ongoing I reported the failure of CFS lines to the Enterprise and Government Group (case number 161679929). I was told the restoration of the Mintaro exchange service was supposed to be completed by Friday pm on 30 September and the fault had been "rolled over" to the following Tuesday at 6pm.

Attempts to report the failure of the mobile service (by several residents) were refused by Telstra's indomitable outsourced Filipino operators with great aplomb with advice there wasn't an outage.... "the problems were due to upgrade works from 3G to 4G"! Complaints to Telstra 24x7 on Facebook advised us to check the list of outages on your web-site. While Mintaro was originally on the outages list it didn't appear on later issues and no one in Telstra seemed willing to admit the mobile tower still was off the air. I think it took Telstra almost a week to fix the mobile problem.

So my questions are-

1. What is your policy on exchange/mobile tower restoration priorities and times, particularly when both services have failed and there is no 000 access?
2. Why did the landline service fail? Don't tell me it was a power issue as ADSL services from the Mintaro exchange were operating several hours after power was restored late on Thursday evening.
3. Why did your mobile fault operators in the Philippines refuse to accept complaints and advise the problem was due to "upgrade work".

Sent October 2016 -
No reply from Telstra.
Dr. Ludeman complain submitted - Nov 2016

Attachment A - page 2.

4. What was the problem that caused the outage of the Mintaro mobile tower, and why did it take so long to restore.

I, and many in the Mintaro community believe there is a lack of Telstra staff, a failure to prioritise critical failures and a failure to provide relevant and timely information about outages and restoration activities. Battery capacities in your sites seem also to be unrealistically low.

Yes, there were major issues throughout South Australia with storms and power failures, but Telstra's tardy and lacklustre response added to problems in many communities and delayed restoration activities.

Yours Sincerely,

Rod Cunningham

Cc Richard Lathlean- Chairperson- Mintaro Progress Association.

Attachment B

Mid North Communications Fail.

Damage by vandals to a Telstra communications tower near Mintaro has created a 600 square kilometre "black spot" in the mid North.

Despite Telstra's various attempts to restore service the tower has now been "off the air" for seven days. Communities at Mintaro, Farrell Flat and further are increasingly angry and frustrated at the outage. For many there is no access to mobile phone calls, messaging and internet. Mis-information or no information from Telstra has added to the problem.

Mintaro CFS firefighter, Rod Cunningham said their brigade relied on paging through the damaged tower and had difficulty getting sufficient crew to respond to a fire near Mintaro several days ago. "With the forecast extreme hot weather and lightning I am concerned at our ability to respond. People rely on this tower for CFS bushfire warnings and updates. The absence of mobile access puts many at risk and vulnerable to bushfire and heat stress. They need to realise they cannot call for help in an emergency. Its important to use the radio or other methods to keep safe during the outage. While I can understand the difficulties experienced by Telstra the response has been slow and parts have had to come from interstate with added delays. They are still trying to fix it"

Farm manager Lyn Jaeschke said Telstra had initially refused to accept there was a problem and when she contacted the head of Telstra Country Wide he was unaware of the Mintaro damage. "With 20 employees it has been a nightmare to contact our staff, to arrange their pays and co-ordinate shearing. When the fire started on the road near our farm I had a garbled call from my husband and I wasn't sure if he needed help or for me to call the CFS. Telstra has failed its duty of care to its customers and their lack of service in rural areas is a big issue."

Telstra customers in the outage have had to drive to nearby towers to make calls, arrange banking and check emails. Some businesses in the "black spot" have been unable to process eftpos transactions and operate their businesses. Mintaro Progress Association Chairperson, Richard Lathlean noted that Telstra was able to provide portable communication towers at field days and major events. Why cant they use these facilities to provide temporary back-up for the Mintaro tower. If this happened at North Adelaide or Burnside it would be fixed within hours. Our rural communities deserve better"

Indications are the Telstra tower will not be back in service until Monday.

Rod Cunningham Mintaro

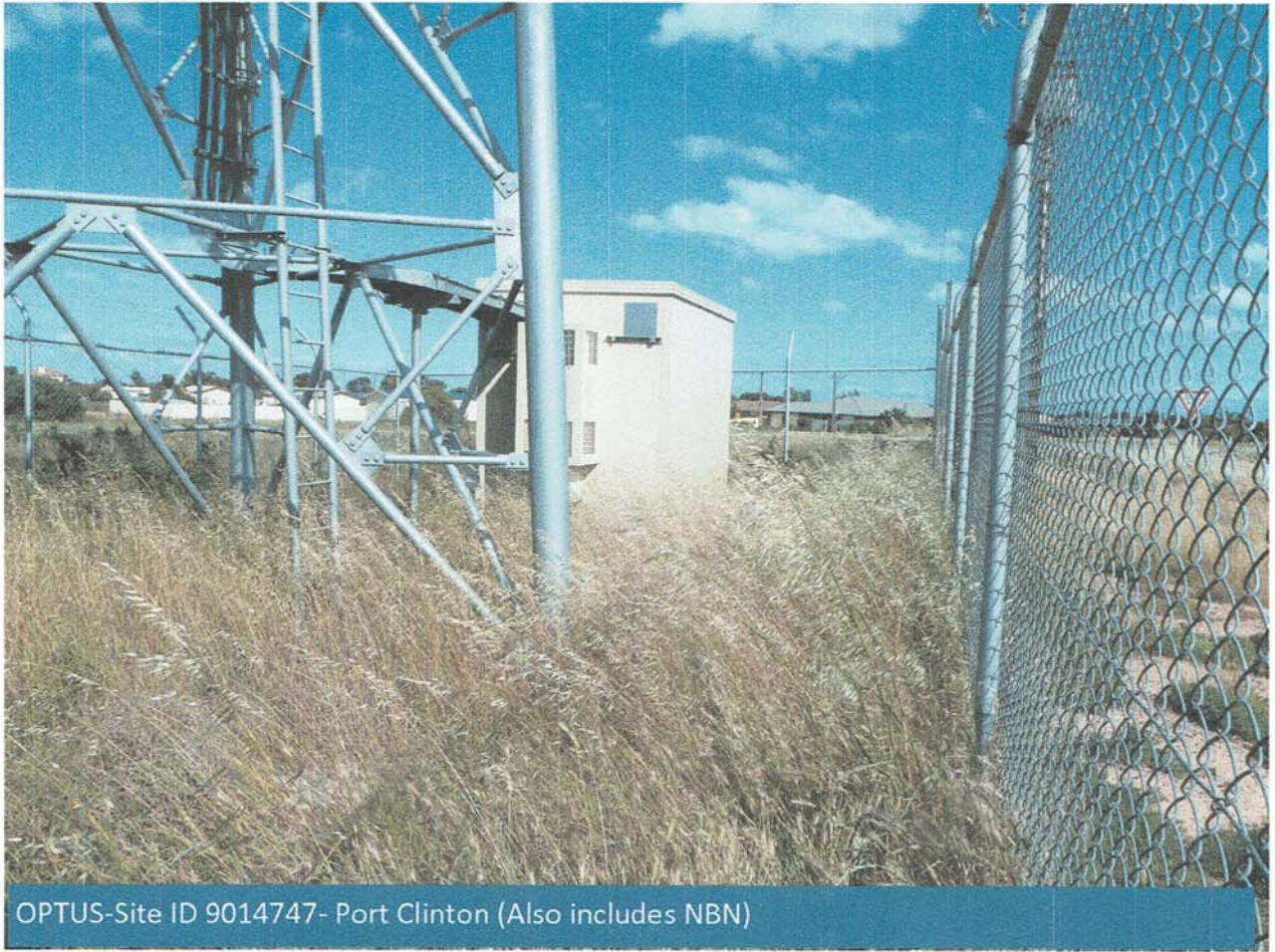
Contacts- Lyn Jaeschke.	Hill River Clare Estate	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Rod Cunningham	Mintaro CFS	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
Richard Lathlean	Mintaro Progress Association	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Note- Mobiles probably wont work...SMS may get through.

Vandal Damage on. Friday 19th Jan
Telstra visited site (due to alarms) 21 Jan.
Service Restored. Sunday 29th Jan

Bushfire Vulnerability

Attachment C- Communication Towers Mintaro and Port Clinton



Testing Sydney, AU | Multithread | Test Servers

Sign In | Sign Up

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06-25-2018

Days [Update](#)

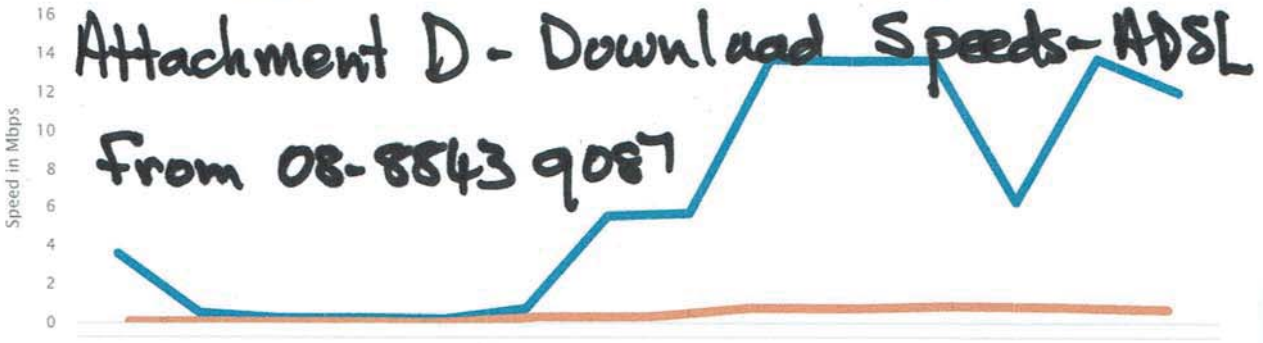
All Time

Avg Speeds: 7.1 Mbps Down 1.4 Mbps Up

883 kB/s 174 kB/s

Max Speeds: 13.8 Mbps Down 9.6 Mbps Up

1.7 MB/s 1.2 MB/s



4 months, 14 days, 4 hours, 22 minutes, 17 seconds and 147.92 MB of binary transfer displayed

Share Query AVG Img MAX Img AVG bbc MAX bbc Embed Live Img Export

25 More >>

Showing results 1 to 25 of 73

Only Upload Only Download

All Identifiers

25 results/page

TIME	SIZE	SPEED	USER	PROVIDER	TID
Mon Jun 25 2018 @ 8:16:05 pm	512 kB	662 kbps 83 kB/s		Telstra Internet	w-ZNQMezA
Mon Jun 25 2018 @ 8:15:56 pm	11.7 MB	11.9 Mbps 1.49 MB/s		Telstra Internet	_buMily~]
Sat May 05 2018 @ 10:21:13 pm	31.8 MB	13.65 Mbps 1.71 MB/s		Telstra Internet	HW4LvSYcR
Sat May 05 2018 @ 9:14:41 pm	480 kB	793 kbps 99 kB/s		Telstra Internet	LGrtSYIN3
Sat May 05 2018 @ 9:14:01 pm	6.3 MB	6.22 Mbps 777 kB/s		Telstra Internet	HPClqBRfd
Sat May 05 2018 @ 6:44:17 pm	1.1 MB	846 kbps 106 kB/s		Telstra Internet	JUwrgG5Yc
Sat May 05 2018 @ 6:43:46 pm	22.1 MB	13.59 Mbps 1.7 MB/s		Telstra Internet	aCMYVg1RL
Sat May 05 2018 @ 5:55:26 pm	480 kB	730 kbps 91 kB/s		Telstra Internet	pUjGWSCO
Sat May 05 2018 @ 5:54:54 pm	14.6 MB	13.55 Mbps 1.69 MB/s		Telstra Internet	IT1fBBIhH
Sat May 05 2018 @ 1:52:33 pm	480 kB	761 kbps 95 kB/s		Telstra Internet	OEwPp6Dys
Sat May 05 2018 @ 1:52:11 pm	23.4 MB	13.63 Mbps 1.7 MB/s		Telstra Internet	hPafulg2R
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:47:39 am	344 kB	280 kbps 35 kB/s		Telstra Internet	CDIdk4Pst
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:46:59 am	19.1 MB	5.63 Mbps 704 kB/s		Telstra Internet	winNGh1rU
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:45:42 am	5.4 MB	5.51 Mbps 688 kB/s		Telstra Internet	kKeQvHqMI
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:45:00 am	304 kB	286 kbps 36 kB/s		Telstra Internet	wm1DyKqQ4
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:36:56 am	96 kB	11 kbps 1 kB/s		Telstra Internet	RChlu4WEd
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:35:05 am	1.3 MB	712 kbps 89 kB/s		Telstra Internet	k6ldXr0pR
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:33:07 am	256 kB	173 kbps 22 kB/s		Telstra Internet	3SJedCq9r
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:31:53 am	256 kB	238 kbps 30 kB/s		Telstra Internet	UhHjXJqId
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:04:43 am	256 kB	212 kbps 27 kB/s		Telstra Internet	JEy9Fz7Tp
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:03:43 am	1.3 MB	501 kbps 63 kB/s		Telstra Internet	2RzTuqMIS
Sat May 05 2018 @ 11:02:32 am	96 kB	27 kbps 3 kB/s		Telstra Internet	MRLw401JZ
Sat May 05 2018 @ 10:58:17 am	96 kB	56 kbps 7 kB/s		Telstra Internet	xVILBoY60
Sat May 05 2018 @ 10:57:19 am	96 kB	60 kbps 8 kB/s		Telstra Internet	ESCprx73A
Sun Feb 11 2018 @ 3:53:48 pm	6.3 MB	3.54 Mbps 443 kB/s		Telstra Internet	0Pws86JRb

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Default

06-25-2018

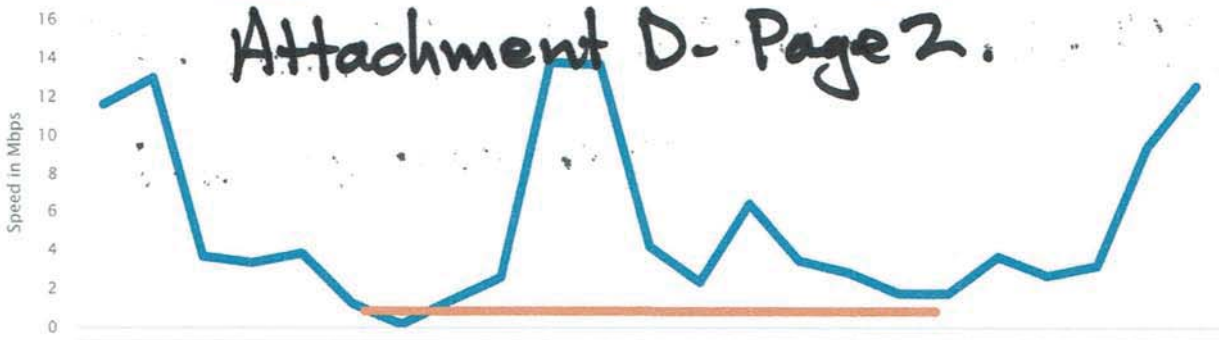
Days

[Update](#)

All Time

Avg Speeds: 7.1 Mbps Down 883 kB/s
1.4 Mbps Up 174 kB/s

Max Speeds: 13.8 Mbps Down 1.7 MB/s
9.6 Mbps Up 1.2 MB/s



5 months, 29 days, 22 hours, 6 minutes, 36 seconds and 704.02 MB of binary transfer displayed

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All Identifiers

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TIME

TIME	SIZE	SPEED
Sun Feb 11 2018 @ 10:49:28 am	6.4 MB	12.5 Mbps
Tue Jan 09 2018 @ 9:41:42 am	8.3 MB	9.34 Mbps
Mon Dec 11 2017 @ 8:13:12 pm	992 kB	811 kbps
Mon Dec 11 2017 @ 8:12:52 pm	88 MB	3.15 Mbps
Thu Nov 23 2017 @ 7:36:41 pm	3.5 MB	2.64 Mbps
Wed Oct 04 2017 @ 9:11:56 pm	44.4 MB	3.63 Mbps
Wed Sep 27 2017 @ 8:58:00 pm	6.3 MB	1.7 Mbps
Wed Sep 27 2017 @ 8:57:08 pm	6.3 MB	1.71 Mbps
Sun Sep 24 2017 @ 7:59:30 pm	43 MB	2.79 Mbps
Mon Sep 11 2017 @ 6:47:31 pm	43.1 MB	3.42 Mbps
Sat Sep 09 2017 @ 4:41:46 pm	6.3 MB	6.38 Mbps
Mon Sep 04 2017 @ 10:06:27 pm	43.1 MB	2.3 Mbps
Mon Sep 04 2017 @ 4:29:42 pm	43 MB	4.15 Mbps
Thu Aug 31 2017 @ 10:55:26 am	43 MB	13.62 Mbps
Thu Aug 31 2017 @ 10:43:59 am	43.1 MB	13.73 Mbps
Wed Aug 30 2017 @ 9:25:00 pm	43.1 MB	2.57 Mbps
Wed Aug 30 2017 @ 5:25:28 pm	1.3 MB	1.38 Mbps
Wed Aug 30 2017 @ 5:25:02 pm	256 kB	131 kbps
Sun Aug 27 2017 @ 9:15:35 pm	1.3 MB	1.21 Mbps
Tue Aug 15 2017 @ 8:47:54 pm	44.5 MB	3.81 Mbps
Tue Aug 15 2017 @ 6:06:28 pm	43.1 MB	3.32 Mbps
Tue Aug 15 2017 @ 5:57:31 pm	1.1 MB	825 kbps
Tue Aug 15 2017 @ 5:54:45 pm	3.6 MB	3.65 Mbps
Sat Aug 12 2017 @ 2:28:12 pm	94.3 MB	12.93 Mbps
Sat Aug 12 2017 @ 12:42:52 pm	42.9 MB	11.55 Mbps

SIZE	SPEED
6.4 MB	12.5 Mbps
8.3 MB	9.34 Mbps
992 kB	811 kbps
88 MB	3.15 Mbps
3.5 MB	2.64 Mbps
44.4 MB	3.63 Mbps
6.3 MB	1.7 Mbps
6.3 MB	1.71 Mbps
43 MB	2.79 Mbps
43.1 MB	3.42 Mbps
6.3 MB	6.38 Mbps
43.1 MB	2.3 Mbps
43 MB	4.15 Mbps
43 MB	13.62 Mbps
43.1 MB	13.73 Mbps
43.1 MB	2.57 Mbps
1.3 MB	1.38 Mbps
256 kB	131 kbps
1.3 MB	1.21 Mbps
44.5 MB	3.81 Mbps
43.1 MB	3.32 Mbps
1.1 MB	825 kbps
3.6 MB	3.65 Mbps
94.3 MB	12.93 Mbps
42.9 MB	11.55 Mbps

USER	PROVIDER	TID
Telstra Internet	XUQ5gEpCq	share
Telstra Internet	Ka6LECOsi	share
Telstra Internet	ZQ5Pahmuy	share
Telstra Internet	O8NCIxsVr	share
Telstra Internet	YjTRmwcNG	share
Telstra Internet	2hqaREAEw	share
Telstra Internet	GBkZswRq	share
Telstra Internet	zsY26b43m	share
Telstra Internet	aNYA5c9u0	share
Telstra Internet	HOO6GSI4y	share
Telstra Internet	UxWSYKd8N	share
Telstra Internet	d5FXkhGJn	share
Telstra Internet	YM1DJLdbK	share
Telstra Internet	tIFugHzxL	share
Telstra Internet	7aPFKyWS2	share
Telstra Internet	XxY0UJ58s	share
Telstra Internet	8AJ1JelFD	share
Telstra Internet	BSmz53aeV	share
Telstra Internet	YazM9oqAK	share
Telstra Internet	mRAMblcYB	share
Telstra Internet	4kahB96Xx	share
Telstra Internet	6tGizQ8ox	share
Telstra Internet	uGPDll8H	share
Telstra Internet	Hwtoc8MuK	share
Telstra Internet	3nUPexhDY	share

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