

Submission to the Australian Government Regional Telecommunications Review

A perspective of a farm business operating in a black spot area

We are farmers in the NE sector (East Belka) of the Bruce Rock Shire.

We rely on the landline service for business. However, this service is becoming increasingly unreliable because of frequent exchange breakdowns and copper networks often failing, especially after rain. Repairs to these networks are only a patch-up job with cable left lying exposed on top of the ground.

Our mobile service is unreliable and sporadic. This service has degenerated over time especially since the removal of the 3G network (upgraded to 4G which is less effective as a mobile service) in the area. The Muntadgin service is disappointing and has limited range which we cannot access. The Naremben (Wadderin Hill) service has lost its effectiveness over the years, maybe due to illegal repeaters and overuse, especially after school hours and school holidays etc. Baandee Tower is at the limit of its range and has also lost mobile effectiveness since its upgrade to the 4G service. This service is designed to cover Great Eastern Highway traffic.

We rely on legal Telstra approved repeaters which when working are adequate for homestead use only. These units are expensive (installation cost + unit \$2000+) and not very robust. Average life span is approximately 3-4 years with replacement costs of \$1200. We are now on our 3rd unit. It has become evident now that all vehicles will have to have repeaters installed to give us a reliable service outside the homesteads. These devices would need to be fitted to utes, tractors, trucks and harvesters as they cannot be transferred between vehicles. This is a further cost of approximately \$1000+ per vehicle. There are up to 20 farm businesses in this area that experience these same problems.

Telstra and Western Power have existing towers in the area which are quite prominent on top of hills and would be ideal locations for a full mobile service to be fitted. This would cover the black spots in the NE sector of the Bruce Rock Shire and also provide valuable backup to the Wadderin, Muntadgin and Baandee services.

Could we please be considered for the 4th round of Black Spot funding.

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