Regional Telecommunications Review 2018

1. What are the main barriers to people in regional communities increasing their use of digital technologies and possible solutions for overcoming these barriers?

Lack of awareness of how to drive digital access to their advantage
Lack of training into the advantages of digital technologies to themselves and their businesses.
Latency of satellite access making Cloud applications unworkable
Cost and availability of data over the satellite platform.
Reliability of service is an issue

2. How are people in regional communities currently using their broadband service and how might they increase the benefits of using this technology?

3. What data-intensive activities are occurring in regional, rural and remote Australia? What digital technologies are needed for these?

Distance Education P -12 has the advantage of the Education Port.
Other Education usage must exist within the relatively small data allowances of the Skymuster system. This restricts access to online lectures (video).

4. How can regional businesses better utilise digital technologies to maximise economic benefits?

The ability to automate processes and have remote sensing that allows command and control of remote services such as water, stock, security from a distant location will lower costs and increase the efficiency of business operations

4. What can be done to improve access to and uptake of telecommunications services in remote Indigenous communities?

a. Services provided to communities must match the aspirations or the population.
b. The use of Skymuster (including Multicast) would allow,

Meetings, cultural events to be broadcast to other communities
A local community TV channel with locally sourced content, with the advantage that some community members would be trained in the operation of the equipment involved.
Education from local sources can be disseminated to multiple communities.

c. Local community members should be trained to teach and support community members in the operation of devices

5. Are there practical examples of how communications services can improve the well-being of people in remote Indigenous communities?

N/A

6. What skills do people need to get the most from their digital technologies, and where can they learn these skills?
   People need members of their own community to teach them how to use digital technologies. More importantly, that someone is locally available to problem solve and rectify equipment issues or incorrect processes.
   Once the basic skills are in place, online lessons can be used to expand the skills of users.
   It is important that local support is available to resolve issues.

8. Have you had ongoing issues affecting your satellite or fixed wireless broadband service? If so, how have you overcome these issues?

9. If you are in an area with access to the Sky Muster satellite service and you have not taken it up, why not? Kim H. I think this one is for you
At present I have a Telstra Next G wireless service. It is very expensive and provided under 40GM p/month. However, it is reliable and fast. I have heard numerous feedback about the Sky Muster satellite and its unreliability in overcast weather. Even though I would have access to a substantially larger plan on Sky Muster at a much cheaper cost, I am not prepared to sacrifice reliability and speed. Nbn has also been unsuccessful in locating my address using my longitude and latitude details and it has been an extremely lengthy process, one which is still unresolved.

10. What economic or social indicators could be used to guide investment to further improve mobile coverage?

11. Is information readily available regarding how to use devices to improve mobile reception in areas with poor coverage? E.g. information about external antenna equipment?

No, information is not readily available nor are there many suitable handsets that accept an external antenna connection.
The general population does not understand that some phones are unsuitable for areas with lower signal strength.
The Telstra Blue Tick type handset classification is not used by other Mobile operators.
This results in unsuitable handsets being purchased for Rural and Remote areas.
The introduction of in-vehicle and in-home repeater devices assists with some coverage issues but a public education program is necessary to inform people of the pros and cons of obtaining maximum mobile coverage and performance. This should include setting up Bluetooth handsfree interfaces.

12. What emerging digital services will be of most benefit to regional businesses and what are the data needs of these services?

It is unlikely that 5G will benefit the Rural and Remote due to its short range.
An enhanced 4GX (700Mhz) is most suitable to provide IoT (internet of Things), telemetry, Video and so on.

13. What broadband services are people using other than those available through the NBN?

Small towns outside of the nbn cable network and have been designated Wireless or Satellite often have access to ADSL. The speeds, data plans and cost are in the case of satellite as good if not better that what is offered by nbn. Nbn wireless can compete with ADSL2.

Private Networks offering a Wi-Fi type service are springing up and have proven to have a superior performance, high data plans and lower cost that nbn Skymuster.

14. How can more competition be encouraged in the provision of broadband services in Regional Australia?

Entry costs for Wireless and other operators should minimised so that it is economically viable to compete with established operators including nbn.

A structure (Tower) sharing arrangement should be established for these operators to access existing structures at a realistic cost.