

The Committee  
Regional Telecommunications Review

A submission re phone and internet service at our address is laughable. The word "service" does not apply. A friend, who had an emergency alert, lost phone connection. The alert relied on the phone. Telstra was contacted. This was the fourth failure in two months. Telstra was informed that there was no mobile service. They promised to send a sat-phone. The lady was legally blind. She had a large digit phone as she could not see a normal phone. Telstra said they would send a sat-phone with a large pad, and a technician to show her how to operate it, as the lady was elderly and not computer literate.

Telstra sent a small mobile, with small numbers, by courier, with a booklet in very small print. It took over a week to get a phone to activate the emergency alert. It took three weeks to get phone service back. There were several phones on the same line also out, but Telstra did not have the technicians to fix the problem.

We had our phone out for several weeks, but could not get a replacement. We were promised a sat-phone on four occasions, but it never arrived. We had no mobile service either, but they sent an ordinary mobile even though they had been informed that my wife's mobile would not work. I eventually discovered that Telstra did not have any sat-phones not in use.

Why? The answer becomes obvious when you see the whole picture. Another friend has a sat-phone. They have had it for months. Telstra gave them the sat-phone while their phone-line was awaiting repair, then did not repair the line. The sat-phone is not reliable or user-friendly, but Telstra said that they had a phone service and that was all Telstra had to provide. So no emergency phones as Telstra has not enough technicians to repair the lines.

Now, if we were a long way from a major centre, this failure could be glossed over. But we are only twelve kilometres from Inverell, the others being 15 and 20 Ks. Why is there inadequate mobile service?

Internet! Yes, we have it, such as it is. Many third world countries have internet with speeds far in excess of any in Australia. Several countries which get millions of dollars in aid from Australia have internet service which Australians only dream about. As for NBN, we in the country areas will never get it. The copper lines will not provide the speed, as NBN operators have admitted that "fibre to the node" does not work.

I live on a road with fifty residences on four kilometres. But I am told that we will not get broadband, only ADSL (which we already have) by radio. But when you look at the map, Old Stannifer road is outside that footprint, so we will get satellite. Those I have spoken to with satellite are dissatisfied with the speeds and the service. It does not give what they were promised. Though my address is outside the footprint, my residence is well inside, but no one can tell me if I will have ADSL or not.

Personally, from what I have been told, going to satellite is a step backwards in internet. The speeds are not great, and the service relies on atmospheric conditions, therefore, it is unreliable.

The whole question of NBN is not costs, but politics. And that is a totally unacceptable reason for getting any but a first class system FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS. I have been in contact with the Minister for Communications, who has answered that it depends on the number of users and the viability. But it seems to me that if fifty users in 4 Ks are not enough, then no service will exist outside major centres. At present, with ADSL, our internet is intermittent, cutting in and out.

So, with poor internet service, poor phone service and practically no mobile service, we have little communications. In country areas, even TV reception is not reliable since the Government insisted on digital. It used to seem that country people were not properly considered by Government, now it is obvious that they are being completely ignored!

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