

## Submission to The Regional Telecommunication Review 2018

### From Merriwa District Progress Association Inc

The Township of Merriwa in the Upper Hunter Valley of NSW has been provided with access to the NBN network for approximately four years using NBN Fixed Wireless from two transmitter towers within the town and more recently Mobile Phone 4G services from Telstra via a tower located on a ridge line some four kilometres from the town centre. The level of Internet and Mobile Phone services provided to residents within the Merriwa Township is generally acceptable.

The problems exposed in May 2016 when a major failure of the Telstra Internet service delivered over the NBN Co network where both organisations were blaming the other for the problem has partly been addressed, with support being directed via the relevant ISP's Call Centre.

However the undersigned's recent experience indicates that ongoing support to the NBN Co Internet and it's various delivery methods is not being adequately addressed by NBN Co.

My NBN Fixed Wireless Internet failed completely on the afternoon of Sunday July 22nd, with all the indicator lights on the NBN Connection Box being extinguished. Having established that the "Plug Pack" supplying the NBN Connection Box was still plugged in to a live power point and turned on, it was reasonable to assume that the "Power Indicator" light on the NBN Connection Box being extinguished indicated failure of this Plug Pack, part of the NBN supplied package.

The failure was reported to the my ISP, Telstra Technical Support help desk who made an appointment for an NBN Co technician to attend the site on Wednesday July 25th between 08:00 and 12:00, the first available appointment. This appointment was not kept by NBN Co and Telstra Technical Support phoned at 10:15 on Wednesday the 25th to advise that NBN Co had cancelled this appointment on Monday July 23rd.

To date there have been four appointments made by Telstra for an NBN Co technician to attend site which have been cancelled by NBN Co, on two occasions without any notification to the customer. The reason given by NBN Co for cancelling each appointment made by Telstra, as passed on by Telstra Technical Support was that as there was ongoing network maintenance to the NBN network in the Merriwa area with possible interruption to the service, if an NBN technician attended to repair the fault they might not be able to verify they had corrected the problem if the NBN internet service happened to be interrupted at that particular time. As network maintenance to the NBN service had been occurring for much of July this explanation was not encouraging.

At this time I have restored a limited internet service by signing a new contract with Telstra which includes one of their recently announced "Smart Modems" and this is providing limited internet access via the "Backup Pathway" and the Telstra 4G Mobile Phone network.

The fact that Telstra have seen fit to offer this "Smart Modem" to their NBN internet customers suggests that they have recognised reliability issues with the delivery of internet services over the NBN Co network.

An online search reveals that a replacement for the "Plug Pack Switching Power Supply" to the NBN Connecting Box is available to purchase, suggesting that the reliability of this essential item has become an issue.

From the above example which I do not believe to be isolated, it would appear that NBN Co need to dramatically improve the level of technical support "on the ground" in regional and rural Australia to provide timely support for already ageing consumer equipment. In addition the communication chain between the Customer, the ISP and NBN Co needs to be further improved so that appointments are made and kept in a timely manner and the Customer is kept fully informed of any changes.

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