

To the Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts,

As a member of the community, long term resident and potential business owner in the South Brisbane area, I strongly believe that the request put forward by Telstra for “extensions to Ministerial exemptions for its South Brisbane and Velocity networks” should not be granted. I repeat this in the strongest terms – the exemption should not be granted.

Telstra is able to charge a higher rate for NBN access than at other comparable areas. This is highly detrimental to both the businesses and community of the South Brisbane area. Additionally, allowing Telstra, a private business, access to a monopoly of providing NBN to this area is in direct contravention of the principles of a free market and anti-competitiveness.

The high cost for NBN access in this area, an inner-city area, chokes economic growth in this area. It is expensive and, quite often, uneconomical to run an internet based business in this area. What should be a business hub due to its proximity to transport networks and the Brisbane CBD is simply not due to the high start-up and ongoing costs of NBN access. Even non-internet based business are forced to raise prices to cover the extra cost of NBN in this area. It simply hampers economic growth in the area.

Similar issues exist for the community of the area. South Brisbane is already a relatively high cost of living area. South Brisbane is an area with a high proportion of lower income residents who are disproportionately impacted by higher prices for household bills. Additionally, this area is fast becoming a booming population centre of Brisbane with many high-rise apartments under and already constructed. The process of converting what is now low-density living within a short distance of the CBD to medium and high density residential is slowed by the high cost of NBN in this area compared to other areas in Brisbane.

Finally, the exemption that is currently in place is anti-competitive. Users should be able to choose the products they purchase and, given that Telstra is able to unfairly price other companies out of the market, this is not possible in the South Brisbane area.

I reiterate, please do not grant this exemption.

Thank you for your time.