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Enquiries:

2 August 2018



2018 Regional Telecommunications Review Secretariat
Department of Communications and the Arts
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBMISSION - 2018 REGIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS REVIEW

The following issues have been raised by Council and the community in relation to telecommunications in the Shire of Yilgarn and are submitted for consideration by the Review Committee:-

Background

The Shire of Yilgarn is located on the eastern fringe of the WA Wheatbelt and whilst agriculture is a prominent industry, mining also plays an integral part in the economy of the district. The Shire's area is 30,720sq km and has a population of approximately 1,200 people. The population does fluctuate depending upon mining activity, however there is also a significant number of Fly-In-Fly-Out and Drive-In-Drive-Out employees within the mining industry.

Southern Cross is the main administrative area of the Shire and is fortunate to be situated on the Great Eastern Highway where telecommunications are provided and maintained.

Issues

- Mobile phone coverage is patchy in the northern and southern areas of the Shire however, there has been an improvement with the Australian Government's Mobile Blackspot Program in addressing some of these areas. The continuation of this program and construction of additional towers would certainly add to the coverage for isolated agricultural residents and mining operations/camps.
- The introduction of NBN has been welcomed in the Southern Cross town site however, dependent upon a residence's location to the distributor node, internet access is extremely slow with residents stating that their access shows little improvement on the previous ADSL service.

- In some southern areas of the Shire land line reliability is even circumspect. Reports have been received that residents in farming areas have considerable outages with their land lines which severely restricts communication by any means as mobile phone coverage is not available or intermittent. The issues are particularly prevalent in the South Yilgarn and Dulyalbin areas with the phone number prefixes of (08) 90498, (08) 90499 and (08) 90404.

In the summer months of 2017/2018 (Dec, Jan, Feb) residents did not have land line coverage over regular intervals during this 3 month period. This has significant implications in times of emergency and whilst Telstra was continually informed of these outages, rectification had not been achieved to the satisfaction of the residents affected by these outages.

Whilst rural and remote residents understand the difficulties in providing services due to their isolation, they should be afforded standardised levels of communication that provide for their safety in emergency situations and unfortunately this is not the case in many instances.

Council appreciates the opportunity of raising the above matters for consideration by the Review Committee and looks forward to receiving positive outcomes following the Committee's deliberations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Clarke', written over the typed name.

Peter Clarke
A/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER