



Tumbulgum Community Association Inc.  
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Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield  
Federal Minister for Communications  
Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600  
[Minister@communications.gov.au](mailto:Minister@communications.gov.au)

7 April 2017

Dear Minister,

### **Tumbulgum Community Concerns re NBN and Australia Post Services**

I am writing to you on behalf of the residents of Tumbulgum and the surrounding community

As you are no doubt aware, the village of Tumbulgum and surrounds have been significantly affected by the flood events in March/April 2017, which have been unprecedented in the living memory of the majority of current residents.

The consequences of these events have, among other impacts, exposed significant issues with the provision of telecommunications and postal services to our community.

#### **Telecommunications**

Many of the village and surrounding community residents have migrated to fixed wireless National Broadband Network (NBN) services via various retail providers, consistent with the Governments preferred direction for rural telecommunications. These NBN based services provide both data (Internet) and voice (VoIP) telecommunications services. Residents typically have no copper-based landlines in addition to this service.

Residents thus rely on the NBN, supplemented in some cases by Mobile Phone services, for their total telecommunications requirements. This includes small businesses based within the community.

The NBN tower/node to which the majority of residents of Tumbulgum and surrounds are connected is located among cane fields on a flood prone plain between the Tweed and Rous rivers in an area called Tygalgah.

This location is typically under water whenever there are significant flood events in the Tweed Valley, which, as you may know, occur quite frequently.

It appears that the NBN node and supporting power/telecommunications links are located at or near ground level, making them prone to water inundation whenever these significant and readily anticipated flood events occur.

The water levels from the most recent flood event subsided to the point where impact on land infrastructure abated by mid Sunday, 2 April. Tumbulgum residents still have no NBN telecommunications services as I write this letter on Friday, 7 April. NBN personnel were first seen visiting the site on Thursday, 6 April.

As you can appreciate, for essential services infrastructure, this is not acceptable.

Residents are currently relying on their mobile services (where they have them) for voice and, in many cases, limited data connectivity. The NBN outage has significantly impeded important local communication during the flood event and in current recovery phase.

Approaches by residents to their retail service providers, and the NBN provider directly, re the outage have received less than satisfactory responses. In many cases, the retail providers (including the most established and significant provider, Telstra) have denied there is a service outage and that the problem is unique to each customer. Even the NBN itself was initially less than forthcoming re resolution of the current outage event.

On behalf of our residents, I am seeking two actions from you:

- Expedition of re-establishment of essential NBN based telecommunications services for our community: and
- Re-design of the NBN node servicing the majority of our community, to make it immune to commonly experienced inundation events. This may simply comprise building a suitably raised platform on which the NBN node, and supporting battery backup plus power feed and telecommunications feeds, can be relocated. Design parameters for flood events can be readily obtained from the local council, and are enforced on all other building projects.

## **Postal Services**

The village of Tumbulgum, and surrounding community, is serviced by an LPO (Licensed Post Office) for postal services. This LPO is located in the village general store.

Villagers do not have household delivery of post, and are instead hire a post box or collect mail at the LPO. Some surrounding residents have mail delivered by a contractor.

Parcel deliveries are also domiciled through this LPO.

In this most recent flood event, the 5 bottom rows of post boxes were inundated, with mail significantly affected.

The village store, and hence LPO, has not yet re-opened as I write this letter (Friday 7 April) – water levels had abated as described previously, by 2 April.

Residents have not been able to access the affected or unaffected post boxes to determine what mail they may or may not have received.

Parcel delivery services have not yet resumed either.

Residents who have enquired with Australia Post re the status of their mail and when post box services may be resumed have been unable to receive a date at which service will be resumed, nor advice re any alternative for redirection or collection of their mail.

Again, this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs for another essential service.

As you can appreciate, many residents and small businesses receive important communications via mail, including bills and other correspondence that can have financial and legal implications.

I again, on behalf of our residents, request your interjection to resolve this unsatisfactory state of affairs,

The Tumbulgum Community Association (TCA) and many of our villagers are in regular communication, both directly within the community and via social media and our TCA Website.

There has been considerable discussion and consternation on the above issues over the last week, which is not healthy for the community and those to whom they look for leadership.

I await your prompt response so that I can advise the community on how the short and longer term resolution of both of these essential services will be addressed.

Yours Sincerely,

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