



# Forbes Shire Council

Administration Centre: 2 Court Street, Forbes NSW 2871  
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Please Quote Ref:

KG.JCC T15/100

2 March 2010

Standing Committee of Broadband in Rural  
and Regional Communities  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
**SYDNEY NSW 2000**

**Attention:** *Ms Vicki Buchbach*

**Subject:** *Submission – Telecommunications availability  
in rural and regional communities*

**Reference:** *Your BRR25 received 21 December 2009*

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Dear Ms Buchbach

Further to Mr Gibson's invitation, Council would be pleased to make a submission on the availability of telecommunications (including broadband) and other technology services in our Local Government Area (LGA).

Forbes is situated in the heart of the Lachlan Valley, approximately 390km west of Sydney. Our LGA covers 4717 s/km and has a population of approximately 9360 people. Forbes LGA is predominately a primary producing area with strong business, education and light industrial sectors.

#### Telecommunication (mobile phones)

Regarding telecommunication (mobile phones) our issues primarily concern the gaps in the service coverage of our region. Whilst mobile coverage is good inside the town limits; it is poor in quite a few outlying areas including:

- Village of Bedgerebong – approximately 30km west of Forbes, this region has limited and unreliable coverage.
- Lachlan Valley Way between Red Bend and Gooloogong – this is a high traffic road which has no or limited service (depending on carrier) for a section of approximately 40km.
- Escort Way between Forbes and Cudal – there is a blackspot (depending on carrier) for a section of approximately 60km. This road leads to Orange, our closest regional city. This is a high traffic road.
- West of Jemalong Range – there is no, or limited reception until Condobolin, a distance of approximately 40 km. An option here would be to install a receiver at Jemalong or Manna Mountain.

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- Other blackspots include the Newell Highway both north and south of Forbes.

### Broadband

Regarding broadband our issues concern:

1). Exchanges

Forbes' main exchange is in the town centre and we have many sub-exchanges throughout the LGA. Our exchange system was developed for voice delivery and has not been sufficiently upgraded for wide-spread data delivery.

ADSL2 coverage is available within an 8km radius (approximately) of the main exchange and also to some of the outlying areas through the sub-exchanges. However, not all the sub-exchanges have been upgraded to carry data and delivery to residences/rural properties from the sub-exchanges that have been upgraded can be slow or unreliable as most still have old copper wiring that over time has degraded or been damaged. We have been told an example where delivery of ADSL2 from an outlying sub-exchange has been compromised because the copper wire was ploughed over.

2). Wireless and satellite data costs

Because of limited ADSL2 access within the LGA, wireless and satellite connections are becoming more common however this is not without its own set of problems mainly higher cost for data when compared to ADSL2, and speed of delivery based on variability of signal strength and whether the service is being provided via mobile lines. In essence we pay more for a slower service.

3). Wireless blackspots

The geographic characteristic of our region is 'slopes and plain' which invariably means there are wireless blackspots throughout the LGA that can only be serviced through dial-up or satellite.

4). Access to bulk data at a reasonable cost

The local ISP can only buy bulk data from Telstra as they have the only carrier infrastructure into the region. It costs much more to buy bulk data here than it does in Sydney.

5). Local wireless network

An option for improving the service would be a local wireless network, however this would involve a major investment in infrastructure and there would still be some blackspot areas.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to your inquiry and I would be pleased to expand on any aspect of the letter.

Yours faithfully



Carissa Bywater

**GENERAL MANAGER**