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Dear Chairperson and Committee members

I welcome this opportunity to share with you my experience here at Red Rock of telecommunications and broadband services.

Red Rock is a coastal "village" situated 30 minutes north of Coffs Harbour 7 kms east off the highway. We are by most definitions not considered a "remote" location indeed I understand that we are identified as part of one of the regional growth areas in NSW. Our residence is located in one of the 3 streets in this small town which does not and apparently can not have access to broadband due to old copper wiring and distance from the Corindi exchange. Other streets in our village do have access to ADSL cable broadband because they were established more recently and the wiring is of the grade suitable and /or closer to the exchange. **Consequently we use dial-up for internet access with a speed of 36 kbps.**

In summary currently we have one landline which we use for phone and internet as well as nextG mobiles which we can use outdoors but with no access inside our home. This is a very unsatisfactory situation when at most times there are at least 2 of us needing to use both the phone and internet for our work, one as an academic providing on-line tuition and the other runs a consultancy business. Today the business world, the academy and the government sector expect one to have ready access to fast internet and a reliable mobile service.

In order to get better mobile coverage and internet access we could purchase a wireless broadband service but we would be required to install an aerial and modem for which I have been advised yesterday by a neighbour (not a service provider or government agent) that we could be eligible for a subsidy. It remains unclear if this would mean we would also have access inside downstairs as well as upstairs. Our other option for internet access is to use satellite technology which again I understand we could be eligible for a subsidy for the dish and installation. Both but especially the wireless service is expensive compared to ADSL cable broadband. Without an aerial our mobile coverage would remain limited with no access inside.

Apart from this issue of a very limited service with costly options, the other issue of concern is finding a reliable source of authoritative information on what is available, which is the best option for our needs, what/how to access existing government subsidies, and will ASDL become available in the future as part of the Federal governments plan to roll-out fast speed internet access to 95% of the nation. There is simply not one credible reliable source and similarly there doesn't seem to be a body to whom we can complain when we receive misleading and wrong advice. Both my husband and I have spent a great deal of precious time trying to discover who can provide us with what at an affordable price. Our Federal member Luke Hartsuyker is the exception as his office endeavours to provide us with accurate and useful information but they too find it difficult to find out what the plans are for our town.

It is worth noting here that Telstra's call centre personnel most of whom seem to be located overseas need to be trained as I have wasted so much time being told that we can have access to broadband with a very good deal! Additionally not one of the staff to whom I have spoken is aware of the subsidy for subscribers who have no choice but to use wireless or satellite technology. They are simply poorly trained sales people with little product knowledge and no knowledge of the context or access issues.

The provision of a quality service to all citizens without prejudice should be possible in a country such as Australia. It is not acceptable that metropolitan areas do/ will have access to superior fast internet and reliable mobile coverage when places such as Red Rock struggle to access even the most minimal service. This is particularly galling when decision makers, including government departments make no allowance for businesses who live in these areas and experience problems with downloads (my line invariably drops our half way through a download that is over one megabyte) and where on-line interfaces are required.

Thankyou for your consideration of our circumstances and I look forward to reading your report. We do hope you are able to influence the implementation of a more equitable quality service provision throughout NSW.

Regards

Deborah Durnan

