

15-02-2010

Wellingrove Progress Association
C/- Peter Smith
Wangalea
5107 Kings Plains Rd.
Wellingrove NSW. 2370.

Chairman
Committee on Broadband in Rural and Regional Communities
Parliament House
Sydney. 2000.

Dear Sir,

I would be obliged if you would accept a submission from myself on behalf of the above organisation. I am currently the President of the Wellingrove Progress Assoc. and coincidentally had a 38 year career as a Communications Technical Officer with TELSTRA and its predecessors, in the last few years of my communications career I was the officer in charge of customer technical services, both the provision and maintenance of customer equipment for the Northern Rivers area of NSW, encompassing an area from just north of Grafton to Tweed Heads and west to the foot of the Great Dividing Range. I therefore have a particular interest in communications services or lack thereof, as well as an understanding of the infrastructure required to provide these services.

Wellingrove is a community located 25 klms. west of Glen Innes and 50 klms east of Inverell so we are hardly what could be called a remote locality or region, however with the exception of landlines and satellite, communications barely exist. I have lived in the district for 10 years and in that time there has been absolutely no improvement in services at all. Our local Federal MP the Hon. Tony Windsor has lobbied the government on our behalf and in spite of our organizing a large rally attended by nearly 100 people including most community leaders, nothing has eventuated.

I believe that ASDL 2 would be available in our local telephone exchange, however as it would only be available to those within a 5klm distance of the exchange because of the technical difficulties associated with longer land lines, it is apparently considered politically unacceptable to make it available to a lucky few. Be that as it may the problem for all intents and purposes could be overcome by the erection of a mobile phone tower on a plateau on the Waterloo Range west of Glen Innes, for which the planning has been completed for some considerable time. As this area has virtually no mobile phone coverage it would kill two birds with one stone by installing this tower, as wireless broadband would also be available via the 3G network.

A considerable amount of the planning has been done by Mr. David Jones, a consulting engineer and Inverell Shire Councilor who has estimated this tower would give coverage to approximately 1500 households who currently do not have it, as well as covering a 50 klm black hole on the Gwyder Highway between Glen Innes and

Inverell. However TELSTRA for obviously some commercial reason has decided not to proceed with this tower.

I believe an easy solution to this problem Australia wide would be for the Federal Government to construct these towers and provide access and power wherever they are required, and then make it a condition of their licence that **all** mobile phone companies be required to provide transmitters on these towers for which they could be charged rent, resulting in a massive increase in coverage and no ultimate cost to the government. This is a relatively easy fix for the Federal Government as the initial outlay for infrastructure is not excessive and is progressive, they have the power to impose any condition they like on the phone companies as part of their licence condition. The phone companies would still make money and consumers would have the choice of using whichever company suits them.

I know it is not within your power to enforce what I am suggesting, however your support for something along these lines would be greatly appreciated by this community and no doubt by any other community in the State with similar problems.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Peter Smith', written in a cursive style.

Peter Smith
President,
Wellingrove Progress Association.