

DARBY'S FALLS PROGRESS ASSOCIATION  
22 Main Street  
DARBY'S FALLS NSW 2793

4<sup>th</sup> February 2010

Standing Committee on Broadband in Rural  
And Regional Communities  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Attention: Ms Vicki Buchbach

Dear Ms Buchbach

COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES, INCLUDING BROADBAND, TELEVISION,  
MOBILE PHONE AND RADIO

Darby's Falls is a rural village 20 kilometres outside of Cowra, in New South Wales, with a village population of 150, plus surrounding farms.

Darby's Falls Progress Association represents this area, fighting for a better deal than its current third world communications, and non potable water supply.

This area is a part of an Australian wide network of some 1200 Television – Mobile Phone – and Broadband Black Spots.

Television: Until 2000 no free to air was received. When the Federal Government financed the construction of retransmission towers, through local design and construction, some 25 homes were provided with acceptable signals for free to air reception. The controlling body DCITA promised that some 105 surrounding homes would have access, however, due to the equipment supplied, unfortunately most homes were reduced to use pay television. For a number of the ensuing years our organisation financed through 25 families, and donations, the running, insurance and maintenance of the retransmission tower. Finally the burden became too great and Cowra Shire Council took over this burden.

When DCITA announced the closing down of analogue signals, we enquired to the Federal Government for finance to be provided to change over to digital equipment on the tower. This request was refused and a cost of \$165,000 was quoted.

We contacted the original installer of television equipment and his figure was only \$55,000.

This amount is completely out of the question for this community. We are left wondering if we will be able to receive free to air television once the analogue network is shut down.

Mobile Phone: Reception is non existent and we have offered the retransmission tower to most companies as a base site for mobile phones without them showing any interest.

Rural emergencies leave us in a dangerous situation because of the communications blackspot.

**Radio:** Most residents receive only ABC without installing elaborate aerial systems. Digital Radio has locals all in the dark.

**Broadband:** The only options available to local residents are dial up on land line, or satellite service. The dial up is extremely slow and compared to other services expensive for a similar bandwidth. The satellite service provided under the Australian Government's broadband guarantee is subject to drop outs, depending on which satellite service provider you are using. The fact that the two satellites use different systems, to change from one service provider to the other is not possible without considerable expense.

We look forward to receiving your attention to the above matters with some confidence .

Yours faithfully,



Bob Langhorne  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE  
Darby's Falls Progress Association

c.c.: Cr Bill West, Mayor, Cowra Shire Council