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Standing Committee on Broadband in Rural and Regional Communities
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Attention Mrs Cheryl Samuels

In response to recently advertised invitations I make the following submission re the Legislative Assembly Standing Commission Inquiry into Telecommunications.

My concerns in the matter relate to the intention to replace the current CDMA telephone network with Next G. I have been advised that the Next G service will not replace CDMA until (at least) equal national coverage has been provided. Whilst this is comforting there are other aspects of the changeover which are of concern.

As a city dweller the change will have little affect on my mobile phone usage when at home however, as one of the many "Grey Nomads" wandering throughout all parts of Australia, the proposed change will have major adverse consequences. I assume that problems which I am encountering will be shared by many other travelers.

I currently have set up in my motorhome a phone system which incorporates :-

- A phone cradle which acts as a hard wired phone battery charger
- An external antenna connected to the phone cradle
- Hands free microphone and speaker
- Voice activated dialing

This system operates through the CDMA network and currently provides my wife and I with what we consider to be excellent reception in remote areas, due to having an external antenna directly connected to the phone. Additionally it provides a convenient and safe method of making and receiving phone calls by use of the hands free and voice activated components.

The current service is provided only through the Telstra phone network. Previously other CDMA carriers utilised their own networks in major cities and coastal areas and "patched-in" to the Telstra network in rural and regional areas which their own systems didn't cover. This arrangement enabled users to have some options in choosing their preferred carrier.

Last year my then preferred carrier advised that their CDMA network would be closing down and I was therefore forced to transfer from that carrier to Telstra as the only remaining CDMA network provider and to accept Telstra's (what I considered) less than suitable contract terms and conditions in order to retain use of the CDMA network. As my phone was connected to the previous carrier's network it would not

work on the Telstra network and, as most phone car cradles are make and model specific, it was necessary for me to locate (not easy due to it's age) and purchase a phone exactly the same make and model as my existing one but connected to the Telstra network to be able to use my existing phone setup. I was therefore obliged to go to some inconvenience and cost to be able to utilise the existing functional arrangements which I had set up in my motorhome.

I feel sure that there would be many others throughout the length and breadth of Australia who had similar problems and who, like me, consider that the closing down of other carriers' CDMA networks has created a MONOPOLY in Telstra's favour.

The foregoing is past history however previous problems are now to be compounded by the fact that Telstra has advised that it is to close down the CDMA network completely on 28th January next year. It is to be replaced by the Next G network. In advising of this coming change Telstra has offered me a new Next G phone of my choice (from a list provided) to replace my current CDMA phone - free of charge.

As a result of advice of the CDMA network closure and Telstra's offer I perused Telstra's, and numerous phone manufacturers', websites to determine which replacement phone I should chose only to find that of the Next G phones available :-

- Most have more "bells & whistles" (cameras, emailing, web browsing etc.) than I need or want (I travel with a camera and a wireless broadband laptop).
- Only one phone, the "Nokia 6120 Classic" provides voice activated dialing.

In a follow-up phone call from a Telstra representative I was advised that a Nokia 6120 Classic phone would be provided with an accompanying hard wired and external antenna connectable cradle suitable for hands free usage. The phone arrived about three weeks later without the promised attachments – the package remains unopened.

During the period between when the phone was promised and it's arrival I made some enquiries through various sources as to it's suitability, installation, usage etc. The enquiries were made personally, by phone, by perusing various websites and by e-mail and were directed to various mobile phone outlets, Telstra's CDMA changeover section, various mobile phone manufacturers (mainly Nokia as the only voice activated phone manufacturer), the Federal Government Dept of Communications and a mobile phone car kit installation firm. The enquiries revealed that :-

- Telstra does have a MONOPOLY in relation to this aspect of telecommunications
- The Nokia 6120 Classic does not have an accompanying hard wired battery charging cradle or external antenna connectivity (a basic cigar lighter socket plug-in cradle is available but in my instance the socket is being utilized for other purposes)
- Hands free connection for the 6120 is provided by Blue Tooth rather than cable connection. This aspect does not seem to be a major problem although it will require removal and replacement of an existing system which has provided excellent service in the past

- Telstra would only supply a free replacement phone and not any accompanying attachments (even if available) to replace those which I had had installed (at considerable expense) to maximise utilisation of my original phone.

It would therefore appear that, in my instance, instead of going forward into the Next Generation I will be returning to the dark ages. I will not be able to replicate what I consider to be a very suitable and functional mobile phone setup and, apart from receiving a free phone, I will be burdened with the cost of obtaining and installing any attachments (e.g. Blue Tooth hands free) to replace that existing. Additionally I will be forced to remain locked into a contract with Telstra for this service, similar to that offered for the existing CDMA network service, when other suppliers in the GSM network provide far more attractive and competitive packages.

To "nutshell" my concerns :-

- I have no basic concern with the changeover subject to the new network providing similar (or better) coverage than the one it replaces
- I have serious concerns about the loss of the use of in-vehicle services which I currently enjoy such as cradle availability including direct phone charging, voice activated dialing, hands free usage and external antenna connection.
- I am concerned that only one service provider is available to cover the Australian rural and regional areas. This creates a MONOPOLY and all of the adverse (financial and other) consequences associated therewith including failure to consider free replacement (and installation) of any existing vehicle attachments (where available).

Whilst the above problems may not fall directly under the heading of your "Inquiry into the needs of Rural and Regional Communities" I consider that many inhabitants of, and travelers within, the rural and regional areas of Australia may become disadvantaged in a similar fashion (or parts thereof) as myself. I therefore request that the above referred to issues be included for consideration in you committee's inquiry.

Yours Faithfully,



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