

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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With 28 Communications motions presented at the 2017 ICPA Federal Conference, telecommunications issues continue to be one of the major areas of concern brought forward by ICPA members.

ICPA (Aust) works closely with the Federal Government, telecommunications companies and other like-minded stakeholders to seek the maintenance and development of adequate, affordable and reliable communications services for families in regional, rural and remote areas, particularly for the purpose of educational outcomes.

ICPA (Aust) is a member of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) <http://accan.org.au/rrrc-coalition> and our members' issues are often discussed in the RRRCC forums. ICPA (Aust) participates in the RRRCC delegations to speak with those in government and this also affords opportunity to raise our members' concerns in an additional capacity.

INTERNET

Once again at the 2017 ICPA Federal Conference, members brought forward numerous motions seeking an improved internet experience and two main areas comprised the majority of the motions: fault reporting/repairs, as well as expansion of the Education Port to include all rural students, especially those studying at the tertiary level.

ICPA (Aust) has discussed and continues to raise these issues by email, phone, written submission and in meetings with the Regional Minister for Communications, other members of government and nbn. One Sky Muster RSP in particular has recognised the need for additional data when students are home for school breaks and now offers increased Sky Muster data amounts during school holidays. ICPA (Aust) would like to encourage other Sky Muster providers to also offer their customers this service.

Faults - With regards to internet fault reporting and repair, we have noted the confusion and difficulty in reporting faults and Federal Council continues to advocate for a simpler, direct process along with the necessity for the creation of a Rural and Remote Communications Help Centre that understands rural and remote customers' needs and can assist them with troubleshooting problems in addition to providing correct information for securing communications products and services. Federal Council will be expressing the need for a dedicated Regional, Rural and Remote Telecommunications Help Centre in our submission to the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC). In an attempt to ensure customer's problems are tended to and resolved as quickly as possible, nbn has created "nbn Local" which allows stakeholder groups to escalate reports of nbn service difficulties on behalf of their members directly to a nbn Local area representative if the regular channels of reporting are not resolving the problem. ICPA is now able to facilitate for our members contact with the nbn Local representative for their area to assist if nbn service problems are unresolved after being reported to their RSP. Members are encouraged to contact either their State Council or Federal Council if they are experiencing difficulty in resolving their internet issues.

Education Port - ICPA (Aust) continues to strongly advocate for the nbn Sky Muster Education Port Service to be available to all rural and remote students with a Sky Muster service at home, regardless of whether they study via distance education, at a small rural school, board away from home needing to use the service when home on school breaks for assignments, or study at the tertiary level. We have spoken to a number of other groups who now also support this request. At this time, we have

not had any progress in seeing the Education Port expansion come to fruition however we have had interest in the issue from a number of people in government and nbn has been open to conversations on expansion of the Education Service. As the Sky Muster service has finite capacity, being able to identify quantitative figures showing the number of possible users if the Education Service was expanded would be very beneficial. ICPA (Aust) will keep the issue in discussions wherever possible.

ICPA - nbn Survey - In January, ICPA (Aust) undertook a survey with nbn regarding customers' internet experience as well as the Education Port. We were encouraged by the number of survey completions and a number of respondents commented that they are not able to access the Education Service. Federal Council is hopeful that eventually the service can be opened up to more students who have Sky Muster internet service at home to help them with their educational needs.

ICPA (Aust) has also recently been made aware that some preschool age children relying on online portions to their early years programs have been unable to order the Education Service and Federal Council has raised this situation with the nbn Sky Muster Education Service team who acted quickly to try to resolve this situation.

Multicast Trial - The outcomes are yet to be finalised regarding the NBN Sky Muster multicasting trial undertaken with Schools of the Air in the Northern Territory. The trial finished in late April and the NT Government is currently preparing a report. It is expected that the Distance Education Broadband Working Group, of which ICPA (Aust) is a member, will reconvene to discuss the trial soon after the Department of Communications receives the Multicast Trial report sometime in July 2018.

TELEPHONE

ICPA (Aust) has had regular discussion with Telstra Country Wide (TCW) since the Federal Conference around the issues raised by the motions and other topics. ICPA members' issues around communications faults will be put forward in the upcoming Consumer Safeguard Review.

Faults- Telstra Country Wide (TCW) want to ensure that issues regarding phone line installation for Distance Education schoolrooms as well as for our members are attended to in a reasonable timeframe. ICPA can assist and take cases directly to Telstra Country Wide if any members are having difficulty with landline installation. Members can contact Federal Council to have their cases followed up with TCW. TCW has also provided ICPA with a list of their Area Managers and problems or questions with faults, installation etc. can be taken to them by members if they have attempted regular fault reporting without success. To try to improve the fault reporting process and outcomes for rural customers, in late 2017 TCW expanded the capacity of the RRADIO support team for those on radio system phones with more agents who are trained on these services and are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The RRADIO team can be contacted by either phone (1800 RRADIO) or email rradio@team.telstra.com. TCW has also relaunched their defined range of network extension devices as well as conducting additional training in their regional stores on these products including how staff can help customers identify, purchase and install the right device for their needs.

Next G Wireless Link (NGWL) – NGWL customers are asked to get in contact with Telstra to discuss their current NGWL plans including options for accessing the current range of HomeLine plans (<https://www.telstra.com.au/home-phone/plans-rates>). There are also options for NGWL customers with an existing broadband plan to move onto a 25GB BigPond Mobile Broadband plan for 12 or 24 months with a \$70 monthly credit (data for use in Australia). Customers, if interested, can call the dedicated team on 1800 696 495 (1800-MY-NGWL) option3 (sales, accounts and payments) to find out more.

Telstra Faults Contacts 24 hours a day on 132203

Telstra also has dedicated numbers for specialist items:

- 1800 696 495 (1800 MYNGWL) for customers using NGWL to report service difficulties or faults.
- 1800 772 346 (1800 RRADIO) for radio and satellite services to report service difficulties or faults. There is also a dedicated email address (rradio@team.telstra.com) for online fault reporting
- 1800 632 995 (Option 1) for Telstra Mobile Satellite
- For antenna installation and technical support call 1800 305 307 (select option 4).

Other questions / queries:

- **Call:** 132200
- **Visit:** If convenient, call in to the nearest store – all regional stores should be specially trained on Telstra regional products and services. Appointments can also be booked for a time that suits.
- **Online:** Visit our Telstra Country Wide page on Telstra.com, additionally you can contact:

Platinum Technical Support This subscription service can provide assistance for any non-network issues. Telstra experts are available 24x7 over the phone (13 75 87) support and online to help get technology working.

Universal Service Obligation- Since the release of the Productivity Commission's Report following a review of the Universal Service Obligation (USO), a key concern of members has been the retention of landline phone services. On 20 December 2017 the Federal Government announced that they will be implementing a new Universal Service Guarantee (USG), "which will ensure all Australians have access to voice and broadband services, regardless of where they live." The USG will cover both voice and data. The Federal Government expressed a commitment to ensuring that those living in regional and remote areas continue to have guaranteed access to voice and broadband services. <https://www.communications.gov.au/documents/australian-government-response-productivity-commissions-inquiry-telecommunications-universal-service> . ICPA (Aust) and RRRCC have met with numerous government representatives and strongly voiced our members' concerns over a potential loss of landlines and the possibility of landlines being replaced by VoIP services which do not adequately meet the need of those living in rural and remote Australia. ICPA (Aust) also maintains that Australians living outside of large metropolitan centres must have at least two methods of accessing communications (ie landline and satellite internet) due to distance to other means of communication and the implications for safety when one service fails. This message seems to have been understood and supported by many in government and we are hopeful that this consideration for voice services for those in regional, rural and remote areas will continue to be upheld. ICPA (Aust) met with the Minister for Communications office during our May delegations and were given the Minister's position that the new USG when put into place will need to ensure all premises have access to both voice *and* broadband services; be complemented by a new consumer safeguards framework; and be more cost-effective. We were also reassured to be told that the current USO arrangements will remain in place unless and until robust and workable alternatives that are more cost-effective are identified, proven and are able to be implemented.

MOBILE

The need for expanded mobile coverage in mobile black spot areas, and recognition of areas which are outside mobile coverage where a rural school is located, requiring either an additional loading or a variance of eligibility criteria in any future Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) funding rounds has been mentioned by ICPA (Aust) in numerous forums including meetings with the Regional

Communications Minister, members of government, ACCC and Department of Communications. At the 2017 Federal Conference, Telstra Country Wide offered to investigate mobile possibilities in areas containing a rural school and they asked ICPA to provide information on rural schools outside the mobile service footprint. ICPA State Councils assisted in providing lists where possible of these schools and the lists have been passed on to TCW and we continue to have discussions with them on this.

Members also asked ICPA to request the Minister for Communications to investigate speeds being offered by mobile network suppliers. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is currently running a broadband monitoring program and are seeking volunteers whose service can be monitored <https://www.accc.gov.au/consumers/internet-phone/monitoring-broadband-performance>. ICPA (Aust) has advocated for satellite broadband, which is not part of the monitoring, to be included. On 17 February 2018, the ACCC published guidance principals to help ensure RSPs do not mislead customers. The ACCC will publish a best-practice broadband speeds advertising guide for providers in the coming months. <https://www.lifehacker.com.au/2017/02/the-days-of-dodgy-broadband-speed-claims-could-be-numbered/>. The ACCC is also in discussion with the Federal government about the possible introduction of a fixed broadband performance monitoring and reporting (BPMR) program in Australia.

Round 4 of the Mobile Black Spot Program was announced by Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Regional Communications on 8 June 2018. ICPA (Aust) continues to ask that rural schools that do not have mobile service be considered as priorities under this and any future MBSP rounds. A reminder that the “Blue Tick” still applies to Telstra mobile phones for identifying handsets that offer the best possible voice coverage in regional and rural locations. A list of mobile phones with the “blue tick” can be found on the TCW website <https://www.telstra.com.au/telstra-country-wide>

Discounts on Antennae and Boosters/Repeaters for ICPA Members

Telstra Country Wide offers ICPA members a discount for Telstra Mobile Smart Antennae, Yagi Antennae and their recently released Telstra Go Repeaters and Boosters (<https://exchange.telstra.com.au/new-telstra-go-repeaters-bring-mobile-coverage-to-more-places/>) ICPA members can call 132200 or go in store and place their order as per normal. Once members have placed the order, they will get a follow up call, where they need to proactively identify yourself as an ICPA member and possibly provide an email copy of their Annual Membership receipt as proof of membership in order to receive the discount. The following discounts apply for ICPA Members only:

- Telstra Mobile Smart Antenna \$50 discount.
- Yagi Antenna \$10 discount.
- Combined order (TMSA + Yagi) \$60 discount.
- Telstra Go Repeater or Booster \$50 discount.

Both Telstra Country Wide and nbn have launched “Regional” Website pages for their customers to hopefully provide information more suited to those living outside of city centres. ICPA (Aust) will pass on any suggestions of what can be added or changed on these regional pages to better assist members and we welcome feedback from members.

ICPA (Aust) welcomed at the end of April, the announcement of the Regional Telecommunications Review which reviews telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote areas every three years and has encouraged members and ICPA Councils to attend any consultations held in their area.

ICPA (Aust) has been well supported in our telecommunications issues by the State Councils, our branches and members and we will continue to raise these concerns wherever it is possible to have them addressed.