

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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With 19 Communications motions presented at the 2018 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 equitable educational outcomes.

The Regional Telecommunications Independent Review

The 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review is now complete and [the Committee](#) delivered its [report](#) to the Minister for Regional Services, Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie, on 30 September 2018. The review highlights many of our own communication concerns for education. The Australian Government delivered its [response to the review](#) on 20 March 2019. The report examines how people use telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia and makes a series of recommendations on how regional communities can maximise the economic opportunities of digital technologies and services. (*Full links contained at the end of the report).

INTERNET

NBN – Sky Muster

The introduction of the new Sky Muster Plus product will enhance rural, regional and remote communications and educational outcomes. Sky Muster Plus is planned for launch in August 2019. NBN has listened to Sky Muster users and taken their feedback on board to develop this new product which will maximise the use of satellite capacity with larger, sustainable wholesale plans for remote end users who are reliant on satellite. Managing bandwidth hungry applications will maintain a low congestion experience for customers. Currently no beams are congested at the wholesale level. Possible future additional features are wholesale plans for large public interest premises networks e.g. multicast for distance education. Traffic tagged as “Unmetered Data” would be excluded from monthly data allowance and therefore can be excluded from speed reduction or “shaping” when metered data allowance is exceeded. “Metered data” traffic has a monthly data allowance limit that when exceeded is subject to “shaping”. Essentially this new product will offer the unmetering of essential services such as web-browsing, email and software updates. Metering will apply to streaming video and music, virtual private networks, file sharing and internet voice services.

ICPA (Aust) encourages members who are eligible and may be considering a Sky Muster service to have the Sky Muster hardware installed while there is no charge for the equipment or installation. This government funded incentive is only guaranteed until 2020. ICPA (Aust) urges members to take advantage of this while they can. Information on providers and plans can be found here. <https://birraus.com/satellite/satellite-providers/>

Nbn Sky Muster Education Service (Education Port)

ICPA (Aust) continues to strongly advocate for the nbn Sky Muster Education Port Service, which provides 50 GB of data with no peak or off peak regulation, to be available to all rural and remote students with a Sky Muster (nbn satellite internet) 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. At this time, we have not had any progress in seeing the Education Port expansion come to fruition however, we are hopeful that

the introduction of the new Sky Muster Plus product may assist members and their families with these issues.

Recently after concern had been raised that not every distance education student can access an education port, ICPA (Aust) had a meeting with NBN regarding this. Access and application for an Education Port does vary depending on whether or not a state provides internet to distance education students in their state. Currently if a student has a distance education student ID number, and they do not receive state provided internet service for their education needs, they can apply for an Education Port. This has been problematic for some students in NSW, NT and WA. NSW, NT and WA are classed as “decentralised”, meaning the state education departments supply an existing network for educational needs of distance ed students, e.g. STARS. However, if a student does not have a working service or access to the state provided service, they are eligible to apply for an education port. Affected families are encouraged to apply for a nbn Education Port to help reduce the cost of internet and provide their students with more data for education.

The process is as follows-

1. Contact a Sky Muster provider with student ID number and request an Education Port.
2. The provider will then apply to NBN for the service, NBN will investigate and ensure a state provided education internet service cannot be accessed for whatever reason.
3. NBN authorises the provider to supply the education port.

The Sky Muster Education Service is not a free service and families pay for each student’s education port, which is usually offered at a slightly better rate than standard Sky Muster plans. Families in some states must cover the cost of the education port themselves. In Queensland, an internet subsidy is provided by the state government to distance education families to help offset this cost. Recently, NT ICPA was successful in requesting similar assistance from the Northern Territory Government Department of Education which has agreed to an interim arrangement of subsidising \$50 per family, per month towards the cost of nbn internet. If eligible families are having difficulty ordering the Education Port, please contact the Communications portfolio leader and ICPA will raise it with nbn.

ICPA (Aust) will keep access to the Education Port in discussions wherever possible. Federal Council is hopeful that eventually the Sky Muster Education Service can be opened up to more students who have Sky Muster internet service at home to help them with their educational needs.

<https://birraus.com/2016/02/28/what-is-the-nbn-sky-muster-educational-port/>

Multicast Trial

ICPA (Aust) has recently been advised by NBN that multicast trials have been successfully completed.

TELEPHONE

Many motions this year were concerning the faults and restoration of telephone services. This was highlighted in the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) Report. Members also raised concerns around the retention of landline services in rural and remote areas. Federal Council have been assured by the Minister for Communication’s office that regional, rural and remote landlines are to remain in place and will not be replaced by VoIP services in their current form. Landline services will continue to be maintained until another means of reliable, affordable and appropriate voice service is available. New technology and devices are currently being investigated to replace existing aging services.

Telstra Country Wide has now been rebranded as Telstra Regional Australia and some initiatives are in place to assist regional, rural and remote customers.

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 the Telstra Regional Australia page on Telstra.com, <https://www.telstra.com.au/coverage-networks/telstra-regional-australia>

Additionally, if you need further assistance you can contact Telstra Regional Managers:

Telstra Regional Managers:

NSW/ACT

Northern New South Wales- Michael Maron - TelstraNthNSW@team.telstra.com Ph 0437 452 487

ACT & Southern New South Wales- Reg. General Manager (TBA) TelstraACTSth@team.telstra.com

Victoria / Tasmania

North West Victoria - Steve Tinker TelstraNWVic@team.telstra.com Ph 0428 538 695

Eastern Victoria- Loretta Willaton TelstraEastVic@team.telstra.com Ph 0428 368 041

Tasmania- Michael Patterson TelstraTas@team.telstra.com Ph 0428 973 100

QLD

Northern Queensland- Rachel Cliffe TelstraNorthernQld@team.telstra.com Ph 0448 636 560

Southern Queensland- May Boisen TelstraSthQld@team.telstra.com Ph 0427 740 144

NT/SA/WA

Northern Territory- Nic Danks TelstraNT@team.telstra.com Ph 0418 185 683

South Australia - Mark Bolton TelstraSA@team.telstra.com Ph 0419 835 041

Western Australia- Boyd Brown TelstraWA@team.telstra.com Ph 0418 748 197

Telstra has rolled out its regional call centre that it has created to specifically deal with rural, regional and remote customers. If a residential (not Business) customer calls 132 200 and their account is listed as an address 100+km from a Telstra Store they will be diverted to the Regional Call Centre team. Hours of operation are: 7.30am-9.00pm Monday-Friday, 7.30am-7.30pm Saturday, and 7.30am-5.00pm Sunday. If outside these hours or if all the team are on calls, the customer's phone call overflows to other teams to be answered.

NGWL Customer Service Guarantee

September 2018 saw the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) applied to the Next G Wireless Link (NGWL) services. NGWL is used to provide fixed voice services to customers who do not have a fixed line connection to their premises. Historically, Telstra's NGWL customers opted for the service in place

of a USO standard voice service on a fixed copper line. These customers made an informed choice to take up NGWL as an economic alternative to copper installation, where part of the cost for works such as trenching on private property would have been borne by the customer. The application of the CSG to the NGWL means that any faults on NGWL services will now be repaired within set timeframes or the customer will be compensated. For context, NGWL services represent a small proportion of our regional fixed voice customers, accounting for less than 1.5 per cent of fixed voice services in regional areas. Under its USO contract with the Government, Telstra is obliged to maintain copper connections to premises that were already in place on 1 July 2012. This means the change does not have much impact on the USO voice service technology mix in regional areas.

ICPA (Aust) continues to be a member of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) and our members' issues are often discussed within the RRRCC forums. ICPA (Aust) also participates in the RRRCC delegations to speak with those in government and this affords opportunity to raise concerns in an additional capacity.

Faults and Universal Obligation

As already mentioned, there were a number of motions at the 2018 Federal Conference referring to faults and restoration times. Stakeholders are aware of these issues and there are actions coming into play to hopefully improve consumer's experiences. Acknowledgement was made by the Minister for Communication's office with a Regulation Impact Statement Update and Universal Service Obligation assurance. ICPA continues to advocate that these guidelines and services be adhered to, and for penalties to apply when breached. Federal Council placed a submission with the *Review into Consumer Safeguards – Part B Reliability of Services* which highlighted concerns raised by members.

https://www.minister.communications.gov.au/minister/bridget-mckenzie/news/landline-works-and-reliable?fbclid=IwAR0X-cMQ87RCZoy0FrS9KkKofrv908DVMv72rBj139ShCP_6eiCvvKa9k1Q

Mobile Black Spot Program

Round 4 of the Mobile Black Spot Program saw some schools that have been highlighted by ICPA branches benefit from the installation of small cells.

Afterlee

Enngonia

Macdonald Valley

Naradhan

Wattle Flat

Mistake Creek

Rossville

Laverton, Cosmo Newberry

Laverton, Mulga Queen

Ngaanyatjarra Lands, Kiwirrkurra

Wattle Flat

The Government has committed \$380 million to the Mobile Black Spot Program to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia. This includes \$160 million in new funding for Rounds 5 and 6 of this highly successful program, announced on 20 March 2019 as part of the Government's response to the 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review. This Program is supported by co-contributions from state and local governments, mobile network operators (Optus, Telstra and Vodafone), businesses and local communities. The Guidelines for Round 5 were released on Grant Connect on 5 April 2019 and the Grant Opportunity (GO2529) was

opened for applications. Up to \$80 million in funding has been allocated for Round 5. Like previous rounds of the Program, Round 5 encourages the mobile industry and state and local governments to work together to address mobile black spots across regional and remote Australia. Interested communities are encouraged to contact the mobile network operators and state and local government authorities to make their needs known. A number of schools have now been flagged to get help through an ICPA/Telstra initiative.

The Government has committed \$80 million for Round 6 of the Program. Round 6 is expected to commence after the Round 5 process is complete. More information can be found here <https://www.communications.gov.au/what-we-do/phone/mobile-services-and-coverage/mobile-black-spot-program/frequently-asked-questions-mobile-black-spot-program>

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. Thank you to my fellow Communications councillors: Wendy Hick, Caroline Robinson, Alana Moller and Jane Morton for their support and encouragement over this last year.

***Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee links**

<http://www.rtrc.gov.au/committee.html>

<https://www.communications.gov.au/publications/2018-regional-telecommunications-review-getting-it-right-out-there>

<https://www.communications.gov.au/publications/australian-government-response-2018-regional-telecommunications-independent-committee-report-2018>