

We are 175km north of Balranald and run a merino enterprise. The landline is the most reliable form of communication at the homestead to do business and personal as we are over 40km from the nearest mobile tower. I have heard first hand the consequences for those in the bush not covered by the USO eg rural areas on next G wireless link and the wait time to fix faults is a disgrace. In some cases over 3 weeks with no other form of communication. Currently our landline faults are repaired in a few days, to take away the current USO on landlines in rural areas would mean an increase in time taken to repair faults where there is no limited mobile service would be a step backwards. We are currently connected the NBN sky muster and this service is not reliable during power outages and in our area there are continual power outages sometimes over 24 hours in duration so this is not a reliable service as our landline does not need power. The same during a fire as messages are relayed from the fire ground back to the homestead and then via landline to the authorities. It is of great importance that the landline is covered under the USO so there is a reliable service in case of emergency. The bush is already disadvantaged and this would only increase the divide by not having a reliable form of communication.