

24 February 2017

Productivity Commission
To the attention of Commissioner Paul Lindwall
via email: telecommunications@pc.gov.au

Dear Mr. Lindwall,

Re: Proposed discontinuation of the universal service obligation of landline telephones in Australia

I hereby make a submission against the proposed discontinuation of the universal telecommunications service obligation of landline telephones as per the recent draft report by the productivity commission. My strongest objection to this move, as an expert, is based on the adverse health effects suffered by thousands of Australians from wireless communication systems that emit microwave/radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation (MW/RF-EMR) knowingly and also possibly by millions unknowingly. This type of radiation has already been classified as 2B possible carcinogen by the WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)¹.

As a medical scientist (my bio attached) who has intensely studied biological and health effects of wireless radiation over the last five years (since I figured out that my own family's health has been affected by wireless devices we used at home), I have grave concerns about the mental and physical health of the Australian population as this transition from wired to wireless happens without evaluation of the health impact. Our medical system is largely in the dark on this issue, similar to the ignorance that existed decades ago about ionizing radiation (they continued to use X-ray on pregnant women for three decades though a link had been found between X-ray and childhood cancer). Similar to tobacco and asbestos, the wireless industry has also manipulated the scientific research² and influenced the WHO's office that deals with EMR (International EMF Project) to ignore the studies showing adverse health effects. Australia's government agency in charge of radiation health (APANSA) has miserably failed to overcome these problems and protect public health. ARPANSA continued to follow the obsolete public exposure standards based on a report (TRS 164 of 2014)³ written by four individuals – none with academic training/qualifications in medicine or biology. Their evaluation of health related data from the scientific literature is severely flawed and is risking public health.

Electrohypersensitivity (EHS) is a *bona fide* environmental illness caused by exposure to man-made EMR, most notably wireless MW/RF that has increased in our living environment by more than a billion of fold over the last couple of decades. Symptoms could range from headaches to severe stress, anxiety, other behavioural changes, and chronic fatigue. Asymptomatic complications include chronic diseases such as cancer. I quote an extract from the 2016 statement **European Academy for Environmental Medicine (EUROPAEM)**: "*Studies, empirical observations, and patient reports clearly indicate interactions between EMF exposure and health problems. Individual susceptibility and environmental factors are frequently neglected. New wireless technologies and*

applications have been introduced without any certainty about their health effects, raising new challenges for medicine and society.”⁴. The economic negative impact caused by long-term exposure to wireless RF/MW EMR is so far unexamined and likely to be massive. I also attach a document I have prepared collating medical/scientific organisations that have already issued statements of concern/warnings. I am aware of a couple of hundred Australians who have suffered from undesirable symptoms from their wireless devices. A lot of them have become very sick and unproductive – depending on social welfare.

Former long-serving Chief Medical Officer of Telstra, Dr. Bruce Hocking has in fact tested many who have complained of neurological symptoms (nerve pains) associated with mobile phone use. He has published these reports in peer-reviewed medical literature and also presented at a WHO conference. I have included some reference related to EHS at the end of this letter. I have also attached a review on wireless health implications published by myself in the Journal of the Australasian College of Nutritional & Environmental Medicine (ACNEM).

Landline telephone lines and wired internet connections are a MUST to preserve health of millions of Australians. Responsible national health agencies elsewhere have already started giving recommendations to the public to reduce exposure to wireless radiation (see attachment for details and links). Some governments have enacted new laws to this effect, for example, France banning wireless systems in small children’s facilities and allowing only wired communications systems. I highlighted this in a testimony to the Hills Shire Council this week (also attached) in a mediation of a community protest against a wireless NBN tower. I offer my expert advice on this topic on a *pro bono* basis as a charitable service to Australia’s health. It is with much weight from scientific evidence that I say proliferation of wireless infrastructure including WiFi, fixed wireless NBN internet, “smart” digital utility meters, RF-scanning at airports pose a real hazard to public health. I urge you not to phase out the copper landline telephones in Australia. Our nation’s chronic disease burden is increasing rapidly and the health system is fully stretched – microwave irradiation of the population for the purpose of wireless communications will certainly make this worse and hamper Australia’s productivity.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to obtain further information on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Priyanka Bandara (Dr.)

References:

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