

Our family of six reside in a remote regional area in Far North Queensland. We have a Telstra RRRadio telephone (landline with a solar-powered two-way radio link), plus NBN satellite internet but no mobile coverage. Our property's access road traverses seasonally flooding creeks so that in the event of a major storm or rain event we may become isolated for several weeks, as was the case after Cyclone Ita three years ago. At such times outside communication is vital to ensure delivery of supplies and in case of emergency. Two of our children have recently completed their secondary education with the Cairns School of Distance Education and two have a few more years to go. The primary mode of communication between students and teachers is through phone lessons; around 20 hours over the school week. Their education is dependent on a reliable telephone service. Apart from scheduled maintenance events and the odd Telstra outage our phone service has been performing reliably for over 15 years. It works independently of our household power supply and is not affected by heavy rain or cloud cover. Our satellite connection however is much less reliable. Having experienced Telstra Bigpond, the interim NBN and now Skymuster (three different systems utilising satellites in varying locations) it is evident that rain fade is a major obstacle to reliability. It is not uncommon during the wet season to lose communication with the satellite when trying to receive weather updates, not a good situation when you have a cyclone approaching. To also be without a telephone service at such times is unthinkable. About a year ago we began experiencing drop-outs on our internet service. Because it was an intermittent problem it took a while to pinpoint but our ISP eventually admitted it was equipment failure and replaced the offending modem after 3 months of inconvenience and uncertainty. How would such a failure affect us if our telephone was also compromised? It would mean driving 20k