



ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION
NORTHERN TERRITORY STATE COUNCIL INCORPORATED

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Secretary: Alethea Nicolle

Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation Inquiry
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

19.07.16

Dear Commissioner,

The Northern Territory Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (NTICPA) are pleased to contribute to Productivity Commission Issues Paper on the Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation. Our views are in response to the Productivity Commission's Telecommunications USO – Alice Springs Community Roundtable and relate predominantly to the utilisation of voice related telecommunications.

NTICPA is a state, non-partisan, volunteer organisation that represents families who live in rural and remote Australia. This inquiry has significant relevance for us, given that members reside in very remote areas of Australia and it is of utmost importance for the continued safety, wellbeing, education and business health of these families to have access to appropriate and quality Telecommunications.

ICPA throughout Australia is a voluntary parent body dedicated to ensuring that all geographically isolated students have equity of access to a continuing and appropriate education. This encompasses the education of children from early childhood through to tertiary. The member families of the association reside and work in rural and remote Australia and all share a common goal of achieving access to education for their children and the provision of services required to achieve this. Many of our families live on isolated stations, great distances from their nearest community with their only access to education being via distance education programs conducted over telephone (PLT) and internet (IDL) learning. Technology is fundamental in enabling rural and remote children access to an aspired equitable education.

In Metropolitan Australia there are up to five forms of Telecommunication available:

- Fixed Line - Voice & Data DSL)
- Mobile - Voice (mobile & VoIP) & Data (3g/4g)
- NBN Fibre - Voice (VoIP & Data
- NBN Fixed Wireless - Voice (VoIP) & Data
- NBN Satellite - Voice (VoIP) & Data

In the vast majority of the Northern Territory we only have 2 current forms of Telecommunication, satellite and landline telephone. At times due to faults often for extended periods we are left with only one form or in some instances none!

NTICPA supports the implementation of an updated Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation; furthermore we encourage the proposal that all Australians have access to at least two forms of telecommunications. We propose The 'Minimum Level of Telecommunications' for all areas where people reside or carry on business be 2 forms of telecommunication. It is vital that where families stand



"Equality of access to education for all rural and remote children"

Website: www.icpa.com.au

Kindly supported by NT Dept of Education and Training and the Connellan Airways Trust



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to lose one form of telecommunication that another be implemented as a matter of utmost urgency, beforehand, so that there is always a minimum of 2 forms of telecommunication available.

It is clearly stated in the AUSGOV issued NBN Sky Muster Service Users Guide on page 12 - Frequently Asked Questions: 'Your internet service provider may offer a VoIP service and many need additional equipment. This service does NOT replace your normal telephone landline and should not be relied upon for emergency calls'. It is therefore evident that the Australian Government is of the opinion that Satellite alone should not be relied upon in emergency situations.

The ever increasing installation and maintenance cost to service providers for the continued service of fixed lines has come under scrutiny with the commission's inquiry, so too is the impending retraction of Fixed Line Services. The resolution is not to pass that costing over to rural and remote families. The current financial cost to families educating children in these locations continues to rise and can be attributed to many families leaving these areas. We implore the Commission, for the sake of our children's education, safety, health and to continued economically viable businesses, keeping families at home in the bush, that the invaluable introduction of at least two forms of telecommunications in areas where people reside or carry on business, most definitely needs to be implemented without families bearing the brunt of these costs.

We thank you for the deliberation which the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into the Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation is being conducted. We look forward to reading the Draft Paper and should you require further discussion please don't hesitate to contact us.

Yours Sincerely

Tiani Cook
NTICPA State President



*Working together for equity of access to education for
all students who live in rural and remote Australia*



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