

The Council of The Shire of Bourke

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Please address all
communications to
the General Manager

Thursday, 19 January 2017

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: Telecommunications Universal Services Obligation- Draft Report

It is Bourke Shire Council's view that the Federal Government should maintain the notion of a Universal Service Obligation for fixed line phone services and /or provide a mechanism to ensure that those residents who live in more remote parts of Australia have a viable alternative to this service in the event that these service obligations are removed.

At present while the Satellite service is providing some suitable coverage there are still many reports from those with this service that it is not adequate, that it provides unreliable speeds, that it is effected by bad weather, that it can take some time for technicians to install the service and be available for repairs and is obviously not available if there is no power. Quite often the unavailability of power is triggered by an emergency when phones are needed.

Mobile phone services are non- existent for much of remote Australia and it would seem that until mobile phone services are able to cover all remote locations then the existing fixed lines should be maintained to an obligated standard.

While the mobile blackspots coverage has provided some assistance to improve mobile coverage an even greater emphasis should be placed on the enhancement of this program which will provide an alternative to the maintenance of the fixed line program (as is proving to be the case in other parts of Australia).

The Productivity Commissions draft findings acknowledge that the voice service provided by the Sky Muster satellite currently falls short of the quality offered under the telecommunications services obligations. The evidence from those using the service would support this and as such it is the belief of Bourke Shire Council that the service obligations should remain at least until greater mobile coverage was developed.

If the opportunity exists to reduce funding for Universal Service Obligation in the metropolitan regions then those funds should be channelled into expansion of the mobile service area so that those large tracks of land currently without service are provided with service.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Johnston
Manager Tourism and Development