

Productivity Commission Enquiry on Telecommunications U S O,

Submission from BH & CM Wakelin, Kimba at Port Augusta 09/02/2017.

As individuals who have observed the deterioration in the effectiveness and reliability of the USO for rural communications over recent years, we welcome the opportunity to explain the challenges and demonstrate the need for improvement for those people who have no access to mobile phone or internet, and no reliable landline. When the landline went down we were further advised by Telstra Service personnel that we were the only consumer where the service has failed, when all consumers knew that the service had failed for all in our specific exchange area. Apparently Telstra believe that we don't talk to each other out here even, if we have to drive 20 kms to do it and find out whether Telstra tell the truth! Is this simply corporate intimidation, by refusing to honour a service obligation to a customer, let alone tries and assist – it wears very thin after up to three weeks of no phone?

We need reliable and economic telecommunications for our safety, our health, our businesses and our viability as a community and without mobile and internet services and unreliable land lines we are more vulnerable now than at any time in our past fifty years. As far as the costs go, it should never be forgotten that the provider has paid for the copper wire decades ago and gained monopoly rents as they make unjustified claims of the costs of any USO (\$3 billion over 20 years suggested currently) without ever having to explain - ....'You live there, cop it sweet...." approach.

\$150 million per year is a fraction of what was once paid for the USO decades ago, and never explained then as now.

The 90,000 residences without mobile services have never had competitive services for their landline based in the monopoly practises of the carrier, which ignores the reality that it is not just about those 90,000 – it is at least as much about the millions of Australians who have no access to the same services when they are in the same areas. There is no focus on the research and development of a technical capacity which is highlighted by the simple reality of mobile phones that cannot even be plugged in to a signal enhancing aerial, due to the "modern" mobiles design.

And a functioning USO could promote the best technology in our modern wireless era rather than a retreat in to the worst access to service in 50 years. It can be simply tested by asking Telstra how often their technicians specifically service rural consumers where their only reliable access to telecommunications is via landline and the answer should not include the time the technicians are servicing the regional infrastructure for the cities and major centres service centres.

We hope the enquiry may define whether the USO has any role in advocating for and providing improved telecommunications services for all Australians at fair prices. Particularly for those Australians who are witnessing a deterioration in services at this time, which is a remarkable observation for all to consider and even more remarkable for those directly affected.

In appreciation – BH & CM Wakelin. 08/02/2017

