

The draft report suggests that once the NBN roll out is complete, accessibility and affordability gaps are likely to be small. However, in areas where the rollout is "complete" at the moment, accessibility and affordability gaps are significant and unable to be overcome. Where satellite is the only option, not only is access limited through download limits, but costs are huge compared to city dwellers or even regional centres. Not only are families and households disadvantaged, but schools in these areas are unable to provide even a respectable amount of data at a reasonable cost. Given that sky muster plans limit 'peak' internet usage, schools are especially disadvantaged because they only need their data during these peak times. It has become apparent in rural south Australia, that once the power is out for more than 6 hours, we have no access to mobile phones or landlines. Clearly internet coverage is out as sky muster modems require power. To be alone in a remote farmhouse with absolutely no means of communication during a severe weather event is both frightening and dangerous. Perhaps a USO requirement should be for all mobile towers and exchanges to have a generator back up and an arrangement with a local to fuel the generator in blackouts. People in rural and remote areas are trying to run businesses with little or no support in terms of broadband access. The future of Australia lies in the development of accessible, cheap and plentiful Internet. Any government activities in this area should be directed towards developing parity between city and country in cost and availability of communications technology. Unlisted broadband at a reasonable price has become a minimum requirement for work, study, business and daily life.