PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

Communications Report

Sally Brindal – Portfolio Holder, March 2022

STATE CONFERENCE MOTIONS

At the 2021 ICPA (WA) State Conference the following two motions were presented:

Lakes District Branch S1
"That ICPA (WA) lobby Telstra and the Minister for Regional Development to ensure the time taken to restore faults, and the entitlements for every working day of delay beyond an agreed repair date is within the Customer Service Guarantee guidelines, in Rural and Remote WA."

Kimberley Air Branch F1
"That ICPA (WA) works with the Education Department to explore a transition from the current Education Port for accessing satellite internet across to Sky Muster Plus to provide for a more reliable and effective service for online distance education programs."

Motion S1: This has been investigated and Telstra continues to ensure that they meet their obligations under the Customer Service Guarantee Guidelines.

Motion F1: In relation to motion F1 Jay Peckitt stated:
"The Department has been liaising with Clear Networks and NBN Co on recent changes to the NBN Sky Muster Plus service as part of our ongoing improvements to student connectivity across the State.

Some of the terms of use of the Sky Muster Plus service are different from the existing service, such as fair use, metering calculations etc. so an exact comparison is not possible.

We are currently confirming in writing with NBN Co a number of specific questions around metering of some remote teaching technologies used by the School of Isolated Distance Education and Schools of the Air under Sky Muster Plus as well as estimated costs."

There have been no further updates available on progress between the Department of Education, Clear Networks and NBN Co regarding NBN Sky Muster Plus.

FEDERAL CONFERENCE MOTIONS

At the 2021 ICPA (Aust) Federal Conference the following motions were presented:

"That ICPA (Aust) lobby nbn for all students enrolled via distance education schools to have access to the Sky Muster education port or alternative service."

"That ICPA (Aust) continue to lobby nbn, relevant Ministers and departments to ensure that video streaming for educational use is included in future Sky Muster Plus plans for geographically isolated students studying via distance education."

"That ICPA (Aust) lobby the Minister for Communications and telecommunication providers, to investigate the reliability and capacity of backup power on mobile towers to ensure a consistent and

uninterrupted delivery of educational programs to geographically isolated children and rural and remote schools."

"That ICPA (Aust) continue to lobby the Minister for Communications to ensure the retention and maintenance of landline services in rural and remote areas, until another means of reliable, affordable and appropriate voice service is available."

"That ICPA (Aust) continue to lobby the Minister for Communications to ensure fault restoration and entitlements for geographically isolated students and their families occur within the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG) guidelines."

Regional Telecommunications Review Committee

An independent committee was appointed to examine and undertake a review into regional telecommunications services. Regional Telecommunications Reviews are conducted every three years under Part 9B of the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999. The 2021 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) has completed its Regional Telecommunications Review (the Review) into the adequacy of telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote Australia.

The Committee held 24 virtual public consultations, targeting regions across Australia, and received over 650 written submissions from members of the public, community organisations, businesses, and local, state and territory governments.

The Committee provided its report to Senator the Hon. Bridget McKenzie, Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communications and Regional Education. The Government will be carefully considering the report's findings and recommendations in developing its new regional telecommunications agenda.

The full report is available at www.rtirc.gov.au.

Recommendations (pg. 11-13 of Report)
1. Adopt a longer-term strategic approach to regional digital infrastructure and skills.
2. Increase Government investment in regional connectivity.
3. Implement a regional telecommunications resilience fund.
4. Trial emerging connectivity technologies.
5. Build connectivity literacy and digital capability among regional users.
6. Enhance NBN Co's regional fixed wireless and Sky Muster services.
7. Implement and enforce new performance and reliability standards for wholesale and retail services.
8. Continue but reform existing universal services for the future.
9. Improve consumer information about mobile services including coverage and performance.
10. Encourage shared network access and innovative funding for mobile in regional areas.
11. Focus on the digital needs of Indigenous communities.
12. Improve affordability for vulnerable groups in regional areas.

ICPA (WA) State Council presented a submission to the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee for the Regional Telecommunications Review 2021. A copy can be found on our website https://icpa.com.au/wa/2021-icpa-wa-submissions.

<u>TELSTRA</u>

Telstra is continuing its focus on:
* 760 WA schools getting connectivity upgrades
* Regional Connectivity Program
* STAND: Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters Program
* Digital Farm Grants

Bandwidth upgrade for WA Schools

- Telstra will deliver a significant bandwidth boost to 766 Western Australian public schools – that is around 94 percent of all public schools in the state.
- Base bandwidth for every student and staff member will climb from 100 kbps to an average of 2 Mbps from early 2021 – a twenty-fold increase on existing capacity.
- ICPA members can contact their local school and/or the Department of Education WA should they have any queries regarding the bandwidth rollout plan and program of work.
- https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2020/12/Massive-bandwidth-boost-for-WA-public-schools.aspx

STAND Program (Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters)

- The Federal Government committed $37.1 million through the Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters (STAND) package to improve the resilience of Australia's communications networks in bushfire and disaster-prone areas.
- Telstra has boosted battery backup power at 341 mobile tower sites in regional Australia from 3 hours up to 12 hours for some of the country's most remote towns.
- Telstra will be upgrading 106 mobile base stations in WA with new 12-hour batteries.
- Link to government website improving telco network resilience.
- Link to the Map of STAND sites.

Regional Network Advisors (RNAs) - Schedule an RNA visit

- The aim of the RNA team is to provide an Australia wide team of regional and rural based Telstra advisors, who can work with customers in their local area on mobile issues.
- This team consists of five RNAs and approximately sixty Local Communications Advisors (LCA's) across Australia.
- Telstra has received positive feedback from customers and stakeholders from the expansion of this team.

Cyclone Seroja

Cyclone Seroja caused a significant impact on the following Telstra services:

- More than 5000 fixed-line services located in Walkaway, Geraldton, Tenindewa, Badgingarra and Moonyoonooka.
- 315 ADSL services located in Carnamah, Mingenew, Perenjori and Cape Burney.
- Up to 23,000 Telstra NBN Voice and Data services located in Moresby Range, Cape Burney, Dongara and Geraldton.
- A loss of 3G and 4G mobile services across 113 sites.

The main cause of the extensive outage to Telstra's infrastructure and mobile services was the loss of mains power.

- The reactivation of power at the two exchanges at Eneabba and Perenjori on Monday 12th April around 5:00pm had a significant impact on restoring Telstra's services – both fixed and wireless - to Geraldton and surrounds.
- This action enabled more than 23,000 fixed-line services to be reconnected and services to be restored from 113 mobile sites down to 59 sites.

Some exchanges received some form of damage.

Telstra Investment
Telstra will direct $75 million from the part sale of its InfraCo Towers business to further enhance connectivity in regional Australia and will be guided by the recommendations of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee (RTIRC) in directing this investment.

This is a significant investment on top of their recent announcement at Beef Australia 2021 in May, that they are investing $150 million over the next 12 months to improve regional networks in key areas, including better coverage at popular destinations, capacity upgrades, upgrading 3G-only sites to 4G and building new 4G sites, plus technology development for long-range sites and small cells with satellite backhaul. They also announced a further $200 million co-investment fund to deliver new and improved regional connectivity over the next four years.

How to prepare for disaster season
With the warmer months comes an increased risk of natural disasters – fire, heatwaves, flood and cyclones across the country. Telstra has put together a disaster preparedness checklist.

- **The prepper: five weeks out**
    - Download emergency services apps
    - Be alert to changing conditions
    - Back up your data
    - Save your emergency numbers as priorities
    - Consider a satellite phone or repeater device
    - Get a corded phone

- **The just-in-case: five days out**
    - Invest in an alternative charger
    - Know your plug for faster phone charging
    - Enable Wi-Fi calling

- **The last minute: five hours out:**
    - Charge your phone. Right now.
    - Use local information sources
    - Gather your government agencies for emergency response information

For more information go to https://exchange.telstra.com.au/how-to-prepare-for-natural-disasters/

Australian Digital Inclusion Index
What is digital inclusion?
Digital inclusion is about ensuring all Australians can access and use digital technologies effectively. We are now experiencing an accelerating digital transformation in many aspects of economic and social life. Telstra's premise is that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from digital

technologies: to manage their health, access education and services, participate in cultural activities, organise their finances, follow news and media, and connect with family, friends, and the wider world.

What is the Australian Digital Inclusion Index?
The Australian Digital Inclusion Index uses survey data to measure digital inclusion across three dimensions of Access, Affordability and Digital Ability. It explores how these dimensions vary across the country and across different social groups.

Why is the Index important?
A detailed measure of digital inclusion for Australia allows Telstra to identify the critical barriers to inclusion. These may be related to accessing networks, the costs of devices or data, or skills and literacies. The Index can help shape initiatives to increase digital inclusion in Australia.

Australian Digital Inclusion Index 2021 key findings:
- Digital inclusion at the national level is improving
- Access is increasing at a national level, but these improvements are not evenly shared by all Australians
- The number of mobile-only users has slightly declined
- The number of Australians who are highly excluded has declined but remains substantial
- The divide between metropolitan and regional areas has narrowed but remains marked
- Digital ability has improved slightly
- Affordability remains central to closing the digital divide
- Digital inclusion remains closely tied to age, but there are signs the digital inclusion of mid-life and senior Australians is improving
- The composition of the household matters, those with children are the most digitally included Australians
- Digital inclusion increases with education, employment, and income
- The type of housing tenure matters – private vs social housing
- Australians who speak a language other than English at home are generally more digitally included

A copy of the Measuring Australia's Digital Divide report can be found at this LINK.

The Digital Inclusion Index website contains an interactive dashboard. This functionality allows users to highlight areas, data sets, cohorts and more to compare digital inclusion.

Call Centres
All call centres are to be onshore by mid-2022.

Spectrum
Telstra has acquired 2 x 10MHz of 850MHz spectrum for $616 million in the Australian Communications and Media Authority's low band spectrum auction. This is the maximum amount of 'low band' spectrum Telstra was allowed to bid for under the competition limits set by the Government.

Together with their existing spectrum holdings, they continue to hold lower band spectrum than any other carrier, which is important given the larger customer base.

This acquisition of lower band spectrum is a win for Telstra customers, especially for the people, businesses and communities of regional and rural Australia.

This type of spectrum is essential for carrying mobile data, particularly 5G, over the vast distances needed across regional and remote areas and also enables Telstra to provide better coverage indoors and in other difficult to reach places in metropolitan locations.

Regional Connectivity Program Funding

Telstra was the only major mobile provider to win projects and commit funding to improve services in the first round. The government supported 72 of their projects, making them the biggest overall contributor to the program.

Telstra are committed to finding ways to bring the latest telecommunications to the bush but policy settings must be right to make this possible. For this reason, Telstra has encouraged universal service obligation (USO) reform for many years to improve their capacity to invest in new technologies for fixed voice services.

T25

T25, Telstra's new corporate strategy, will kick-off from 1st July 2022 and builds on the foundations established over the last three years with T22. It will keep Telstra focused on what matters most – their customers, their people and their shareholders, and helping create a vibrant digital economy in Australia.

T25 aligns with Telstra's commitment to regional Australia. Their commitment extends beyond T25 through their focus on regional people and communities and their investment commitments. This is in addition to the $200 million over four years toward co-investment and also directing $75 million from the partial sale of their towers business to improve connectivity in the country announced earlier this year.

Moonhack 2021

This year, Code Club Australia, powered by the Telstra Foundation, ran yet another successful Moonhack event over one week in May. Moonhack 2021 celebrated the stories and ideas that can help us improve and understand our planet by helping kids code their own planet-saving solutions. Projects included a beautiful lesson about Dhinawan, the Emu in the Sky constellation recognised by the Gomeroi people.

The event had over 24,000 kids participate, 48 per cent of whom were girls, bringing the total number of kids who have joined Moonhack over the past six years to more than 150,000.

Environmental Action

As a leading provider and large-scale user of telecommunications hardware, Telstra are committed to optimising the resources they use, reducing consumption and waste across their business, and investing in 'circular solutions' that are designed to be sustainable across their lifecycle.

To do this they have set three new resource efficiency goals:
- Reuse or recycle 500,000 mobile phones, modems and other devices each year to 2025.
- Ensure 100% of Telstra-branded packaging is made of renewable or recycled material and is fully recyclable by 2022.
- Increase their network waste recycling rate to 85% by 2025.

Telstra Payphones Free

Telstra has made all local and national calls from their 15,000 public payphones free.

Last year alone, Australians made 11 million calls on payphones, including 200,000 calls to vital services such as Triple Zero and Lifeline. During natural disasters, Australians have been lining up to use the payphone to call home and tell their family and friends they are safe.

Payphones play such a critical role in our community, particularly in times of need. They are a lifeline for thousands of vulnerable Australians - the homeless, the isolated, those escaping domestic violence and are sometimes the only link Australians have to critical support services or to those that care about them. The payphone network that Telstra have been maintaining since the 1880s is a key part of that; it is now free for everyone to make calls anywhere in Australia.

Scams

Telstra now blocks about 1.5 million suspected scam calls in Australia every week, and about 6.5 million every month. It is part of their Cleaner Pipes initiative, where they are working to reduce the harm of scams, phishing, ransomware and other malware across their networks.

They are doing a lot behind the scenes to block illegitimate activity, but there is a lot that you can do too. If you think you are receiving a scam call, the simplest advice is to hang up. But how do you know for sure it is actually a scam? Thankfully, combined with some healthy scepticism, there are usually clear signs that will help you spot a scam.

Here are Telstra's top five tips:

Do not be convinced if it looks like an incoming call from a legitimate business or government organisation.

- Is the caller pressuring you and making it seem like the matter is urgent?
- Take note of the time of day – is it a reasonable time for a trusted organisation to be calling you?
- Is an unknown number or trusted brand trying to call you repeatedly?
- The golden rule: if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

We know that scam callers often prey on the public's inexperience about complex or highly technical topics. They will try to confuse you and pressure you to act quickly to transfer money or share your private details without giving you time to think rationally. Your best weapon in our ongoing fight against scammers is your own scepticism and caution. Remember, Telstra's advice is simply to hang up if you think you are being scammed.

FluBot – the latest cyber scam and how to avoid it

One of the latest scams going around is the prolific FluBot SMS-based cyber-attack that encourages potential victims to install a fake security update to remove an equally fake FluBot infection. Instead, if you click on a malicious link in a FluBot-related SMS message, malware (like a computer virus) may be installed on your Android device. This malware then sends many similar text messages to other people from your phone without your knowledge, potentially infecting them.

NBN CO

For rural and remote families NBN Co has two products: Skymuster and Sky Muster Plus (you cannot apply for a satellite service if you live in metro areas).

Skymuster was the original satellite service offered by NBN Co where all data is metered.

Sky Muster Plus is an upgrade of the original Sky Muster and offers unmetered activities with only two exclusions – video streaming (Netflix, YouTube, TikTok, Foxtel, Stan) and VPN traffic – which continue to be metered. Unmetered examples include WhatsApp, Google Duo, Instagram Live, Viber, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype, Facebook Messenger, Facetime, Snapchat, GoToMeeting.

Ms Naomi Evans, Head of nbn Local WA (Regional and Community) commented Nbn are continuing to make progress in the following areas:

- NBN strengthening telecommunications in regional communities.
- Regional development and engagement.
- Supporting priority segments, of which education is one.
- Support that was offered during COVID-19.
- Sky Muster Plus satellite service.
- Ensuring Australians of any age can participate in online learning.
- Digital capability tool – understanding what digital capabilities look like across different sectors.

Video conferencing connectivity guide

Due to COVID-19, over the past year so many people have been relying on videoconferencing for work, learning, health appointments, education and more. To assist community members, health care providers, carers, teachers and others confidently utilise videoconferencing for these interactions, nbn has developed a new nbn ™ video conferencing connectivity guide. The interactive guide covers common issues videoconferencing users may experience including:

- Slow internet speeds
- Video freezing or lagging
- Video dropping out
- Video not working at all
- Sound dropping out
- Sound not working

The aim of the guide is to provide quick guidance on common videoconferencing issues to help users take advantage of video calling for a whole range of activities. Users of the guide simply select the issue they are facing and will be provided with a number of troubleshooting tips to try, including directions on when they need to contact their internet provider and what information to have on hand. You can access this guide on the nbn website or the following LINK

nbn recommends users download the guide from their browser and save to the desktop in case it is ever needed.

Cyclone Seroja

As a result of cyclone Seroja 13,530 services were impacted due to damage to the network and associated power loss. nbn's Satellite Earth Station (SES) at Geraldton suffered damage to its backup power supply. The Geraldton SES services many nbn™ Sky Muster Satellite customers across Australia. As a result, some satellite customers across the country – not only in Western Australia – were impacted. Wendy Hick, Immediate Past President, Federal Council, who lives in north Queensland had her satellite service interrupted due to the SES in Geraldton suffering damage!

In total, NBN Co recovered and restored nbn services to more than 16,500 premises within five days of this extreme weather event.

Where mains power outages persisted in some areas of Western Australia nbn infrastructure in these areas continued to be supported by backup generators as an interim measure until Western Power restored mains power across the region.

Alternative Voice Services Trial

nbn is working with the government as part of the Australian Government's Alternative Voice Services Trial (AVST) which is testing voice over internet calling across satellite and fixed wireless technologies. ICPA WA were approached to help promote this valuable trial to their members.

Trial voice services operate as an additional service to the existing phone and internet services at participant premises. The participants are required to maintain their existing phone service for the duration of the trial. The trial phone service will connect voice calls using VoIP (voice calling over the internet) technology. The nbn trial will focus on testing voice services over the nbn™ Fixed Wireless, nbn™ Satellite networks, and over a new low band Fixed Wireless solution. Technology type and the location of the premise will inform the incentive the participants will receive for taking part in the trial.

Trial participants will receive:
- a voice service from a participating service provider for up to 12 months at no extra charge
- up to $400 financial incentive
- a telephone handset
- other telephone monitoring equipment and a battery backup providing 4 hours of a power supply when their regular power source fails.

As part of the trial, nbn will be seeking real-time feedback from the people participating, via their provider. This will assist nbn and the Australian Government in developing voice solutions that help meet the needs of people living in regional and rural areas.

To find out more information and how to register customers will need to visit nbn website Alternative Voice Services trial.

Regional Connectivity Program

nbn is working with state and local government on a suite of applications for Round 2 of the Regional Connectivity Program. Up to $112 million in Federal Government grant funding is available to support regional, rural and remote communities, including $45 million dedicated for projects in Northern Australia under the Connecting Northern Australia initiative. Applications closed on 28th January with an announcement expected by mid-2022. To learn more about the program or how they can potentially partner on infrastructure opportunities please reach out to your nbn contact.

Scam Warning

Members are advised that there are still scams occurring in relation to nbn. Customers are contacted by someone claiming to be from nbn asking for personal information and/or a threat to services being cut.

OSCAR

Want to improve your online skills?

With more of our lives and daily activities happening online, knowing how to navigate the digital world is more important than ever.

That is where OSCAR comes in. nbn created the Online Skills Check & Resource (OSCAR) to help measure our skills and find resources to help us on our digital journey.

OSCAR takes us through four essential competencies:
- Online knowledge
- Device usage
- Sharing data and e-safety
- Online communication

Want to learn more?

Check your online skills and find relevant resources