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## **Communications Report**

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Madam President, Invited Guests, Federal Council, Fellow State Council, and Members, it does give me great pleasure to be presenting the Communications report for the 2023 year.

### **3G Closure**

The planned 3 G closure is very close. The life expectancy of a mobile connection is 20 years. 3G has been around for 20 years. Many of you are frustrated with the lack of service over the past 12 months. It is hoped that once the spectrum becomes available, following the closure of 3G, we will experience a more reliable and consistent service. If your experience is not better after the 30<sup>th</sup> June, you are asked to get in touch with ICPA, as we have been promised at least an equivalent service to what we did have had almost 2 years ago. Believe it or not, but 6 G is on the horizon. I would like to thank Louth Branch for bringing the motion about a better service once 3 G is switched off. This has been my comment at every meeting for the last two years. I actually don't like the word equivalency as we are expecting it to be better.

The long-standing motion from Namoi branch regarding assistance for antennas and boosters is still being pushed. Telstra has asked for assistance for people in their co-investment submissions and the Farm connectivity assistance. To date this assistance is unfortunately still not available. ICPA will keep the issue at the forefront.

### **Closure of Next G Wireless Link (NGWL)**

Along with the 3 G closure comes the NGWL closure. Telstra have a designated team working to upgrade rural and remote landlines that are currently working on the NGWL system.

These NGWL services are being replaced with the Telstra 4G Fixed Wireless (Telstra 4GFW) service. This service works on a (700MHz) frequency rather than the (850MHz) the NGWL works on. With the change to the Telstra 4GFW, consumers will have a Telstra Smart Modem 3 installed instead of the Ericsson W25 or Calyptech CWG-100 modems.

### **Digital literacy**

Telstra are working with the Local Government Association to look at access to the service, affordability (which is 2% or less of the population), and the ability of the users. Telstra is wanting to retain, grow and provide a better service for everyone. Along with this partnership they are planning for success and improving the connectivity literacy.

### **NBN Webinars**

I would like to thank the NBN for providing late last year, a series of webinars to provide information to members. The few webinars I did attend, I found them to be very informative.

Some relevant information to come from the webinars were a website that you can look up to see if you have been hacked. The website is [Havebeenpwned.com](https://www.havebeenpwned.com)

Another useful website regarding child safety online is [thinkuknow.org.au](https://www.thinkuknow.org.au)

## **School Student Broadband Initiative (SSBI)**

There is free internet available for any family who have school-aged students who do not have access to the internet. The Australian Government has made this assistance available until the end of December 2025. Please avail yourself of this initiative if you are eligible. Further information can be found at [www.nbnco.com.au/campaigns/school-student-broadband-initiative](http://www.nbnco.com.au/campaigns/school-student-broadband-initiative). You can also catch up with NBN whilst you are at conference. They are in the room.

There is now a referral centre for direct contact and support, should you be eligible for this initiative. The number is 1800 954 610. This centre is open Monday to Friday from 10 am to 6pm (AEDT). The referral centre can be contacted by a website. [www.anglicarevic.org.au/student-internet](http://www.anglicarevic.org.au/student-internet). The initiative offers a voucher allowing the family to spend it at a participating SSBI retail service provider.

## **NBN Co Road trip**

NBN Co have organised a road trip after the ICPA-NSW conference, and we have been invited to ask Telstra and the Regional Tech Hub to be part of this information tour. ICPA-NSW, NSW Farmers and CWA of NSW will be continuing to spread the word about the tour and encouraging members to take the opportunity to meet with the Telco's. There are two trips:

- 1) Louth – Bourke – Brewarrina– Walgett – Coonamble – Nyngan – Cobar starting on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024
- 2) Goolgowi – Hillston – Lake Cargelligo – Condobolin – West Wyalong – Rankins Springs on the week starting 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

ICPA-NSW thanks NBN for planning such a trip, which should be very useful and informative sessions for members.

## **NBN Sky Muster Plus Premium Plans**

The new Sky Muster Plus Premium plans are designed to provide homes and small businesses in regional and remote Australia with more options for uncapped data use for all their internet activities, following the launch of new nbn Sky Muster Plus Premium satellite plans.

There are three plans:

- Sky Muster Plus Premium – high tier option: Replaces the current nbn Sky Muster Plus Premium plan and offers uncapped data use with maximum wholesale speeds of 100/5 Mbps at least once every 24-hour period and an anticipated typical busy period wholesale download speed of 48 Mbps.
- Sky Muster Plus Premium – mid tier option: A new plan that offers uncapped data use with maximum wholesale speeds of 50/5 Mbps at least once every 24-hour period and an anticipated typical busy period wholesale download speed of 31 Mbps.

- Sky Muster Plus Premium – entry tier option: A new plan that offers uncapped data use with maximum wholesale speeds of 25/5 Mbps at least once every 24-hour period and an anticipated typical busy period wholesale download speed of 16 Mbps.

In addition to the new plans, nbn is also introducing other new features for Sky Muster Plus and Premium users such as the option to purchase dedicated static IP (internet protocol) addresses for users who wish to do things like remotely access their network from outside their property.

Enhancements to NBN satellite services are made possible due to upgrades to the NBN Fixed Wireless network, which includes migrating around 120,000 premises from the NBN satellite footprint to access NBN Fixed Wireless for the first time. This is part of a nation-wide upgrade program to deliver better broadband for homes and businesses across regional and remote Australia.

The motion from the Brewarrina branch in March 2018 **“That ICPA NSW continues to lobby all internet service providers and NBN to give rural isolated students unlimited data allowances”** has further been enhanced with more options with the introduction of these new plans.

### **Satellite Connections**

In June 2023 Telstra partnered with OneWeb to deliver Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite to remote mobile sites. Telstra says this will improve the mobile experience for remote communities with the low latency connections.

In July 2023 Telstra set up a deal to resell Starlink broadband plans which also include a voice service. This broadband connection is expected to give better latency, download speeds and a better experience all round than the current ADSL. This Starlink deal comes with onshore and on the ground support for all installations and technical problems.

The rollout of the OneWeb LEO cellular backhaul has begun. The first call has already been made. The average bandwidth for these OneWeb LEO sites will increase at least 15x and the average latency will reduce tenfold. Telstra is expecting that customers in rural and remote areas will have lower latency, higher speeds, and a more consistent experience.

### **Universal Service Obligation (USO)**

This legislation requires the Universal Service Provider (Telstra) to connect a telephone service to any premise in Australia and to provide payphones. The USO is under review again and ICPA Federal and States will be responding to the review, which closes on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The review was announced in October by the Minister for Communications, the Hon Michelle Rowland. The purpose of the review is to commence a ‘broad consultation with industry and the community on the delivery of a modern and more fit for purpose (USO)’.

ICPA-NSW will be able to put the following Louth motion into the review.

***“That ICPA-NSW request that the Telstra Corporation ensure that there are reliable and continuous telecommunications services available to rural and remote students and their families.”***

## **Regional Tech Hub**

It is wonderful that the Regional Tech Hub is at conference. Please avail yourselves of their information. The Regional Tech Hub phone number is 1300 081 029. Opening hours are

Mon: 12pm – 5pm

Tue: 12pm – 5pm

Wed: 9am – 2pm

Thu: 9am – 2pm

Fri: 9am – 2pm

Otherwise, you can leave a message and they will get back to you.

## **Telstra Connected Communities Grant**

The grant program opened on 27 Feb 2024 and closes on 27/03/2024.

- Resilient communities that are well prepared and socially connected when disaster strikes with the ability to renew and recover together.
- Sustainable communities that are diverse and inclusive, planning for the health, wellbeing, and prosperity of their people and the planet; and
- Liveable communities that have digital capability and help to equip individuals with the skills to live, learn and work in a digital society.

The program offers not for profit organisations an opportunity to apply for \$10 000.

During our main deputation week to Sydney back in June 2023 we enjoyed catching up with both NBN and Telstra. We thank both Telco's for sparing time to meet with us. ICPA-NSW continues to have a seat on the Telstra Regional Advisory Committee, which meets virtually most of the time.

We are also having quarterly catchups with NBN, CWA of NSW and NSW Farmers, which are proving useful virtual meetings.

Stay connected and stay in touch.

Libby McPhee  
Communications Officer