PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

COMMUNICATIONS REPORT

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The 2018 Conference communications motions required ICPA (WA) State Council to advocate for reliable service/connection, plans to address bandwidth limitations to rural and remote schools and mobile blackspot areas affecting Branch Members.

Correspondence with the Department of Education (DoE), Service providers such as Telstra Countrywide, NBN Local and ICPA Federal Council has been proactive and promising.

Fibre optic services
Installation of mobile service towers has been leveraged to provide fibre optic broadband services to schools near new mobile towers. Throughout 2017 and continuing in 2018/19, 137 regional and remote schools have been, or will be, connected to fibre optic services.

Mobile Satellite Small Cell solution
The DoE is in early discussions with Telstra about trialling the small cell 4G mobile service which may be an option for sites to address mobile and possibly band width limitations.

The Telstra 4GX-lite Mobile Satellite Small Cell solution: Telstra plan to launch 500 small cells across regional and remote Australia over the next 3 years. This solution can be economically delivered to areas that previously have never had mobile coverage.

The Satellite Small Cell is funded by co-contributions from Telstra and the customer, where the customer pays an initial amount to cover the cost of installation and Telstra build and maintain the small cell, reducing the cost of gaining access to new coverage from hundreds of thousands of dollars for a new base station to tens of thousands.

NBN Skymuster Plus product
ICPA Federal and State Council have also been involved in National and State meetings with NBN and industry stakeholders. The regions eagerly await the NBN Skymuster Plus product launch some time in 2019. This will provide unmetered access across specified web browsing (education, health and commerce based), email, smart phone and PC operating system updates. These downloads will not count towards monthly data allowances. NBN is currently consulting with Retail Service Providers (RSPs) on how this product will be presented to customers.

This announcement will see primary, secondary, tertiary and boarding students with Sky Muster services at home able to participate.

Rural schools and students will also stand to gain from this new paid option. The solutions offered by NBN will hopefully enable better management of bandwidth and allow nomination of bandwidth-based services (for example, Webex) to be unmetered and therefore not impact monthly download volumes.

Mobile Blackspots
ICPA (WA) provided written support to the Goodlands Ag Committee to address mobile coverage to the existing 178,000-hectare Mobile Black Spot area (Motion A23). School bus routes and conveyance spurs do not have communication when en route to geographically isolated primary schools within the region. The Goodlands Tower

was one of the eight projects approved in the network co-investment fund. Telstra's Co-investment Fund supports improved mobile coverage for regional Australia by co-investing with external partners (over and above the federally-funded Mobile Black Spot Program). Congratulations to the Goodlands community for your hard work inadvocating for equity in access to telecommunications, hence supporting member's families in the regions.

A list of schools in the mobile blackspot is actively being collated. Mobile coverage is additionally important in case of emergencies, where power may be out or in adverse weather conditions where internet/ Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) is of no use. Sometimes the school may be the centre of evacuation in rural or remote communities. This is hampered if there is no mobile coverage.

Telstra Regional Advisory Council
Telstra have established state-based Regional Advisory Councils (RAC) to ensure the voice of rural and regional stakeholders is heard and where appropriate acted upon. Comprising membership from a broad array of regional organisations (e.g. advocacy associations including ICPA, local government, agricultural organisations, primary producers), they are co-chaired by a Telstra executive and an external stakeholder. One of the key functions of the RAC is to identify projects with strong social and economic advantages for local communities. The RAC meet 3 to 4 times per year, with the last meeting held in November 2018 in Perth and with State President Tash Johns representing ICPA (WA).

NBN Local:
Tash and Amanda met with Rachael McIntyre, Head of NBN Local and Jane McNamara Manager WA, NBN Local. We discussed the relationship with nbn Local to share info with our members via newsletters and conference involvement.

The focus of the nbn local team is to educate local communities on the status of the rollout, how to connect and how to resolve any issues. The nbn local team will work with regional stakeholders and community groups to help ensure larger local problems and concerns are identified early and addressed.

NBN regional and remote landing page
Provides up to date information about nbn technologies, FAQs and upcoming community events.
https://www1.nbnco.com.au/residential/learn/regional

ICPA Member Case Studies
Please contact ICPA if you are willing to be part of a series of case studies and stories as part of a content partnership with NBN. If we can identify issues, problems and concerns with the service providers and stakeholders and share our stories, we can move forward in accessing equitable communication.

RTIRC
The *Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee* (RTIRC) reviewed telecommunications services in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia. RTIRC Hearings were held around the country in 2018. Concerns centred around issues of access, specific stakeholder matters, the state of Telstra's landline network, confusion around NBN services (fixed wireless is generally criticised while Sky Muster satellite appears to be gaining greater acceptance), and in some hearings there has been a greater focus on the need to educate communities around technology rollouts, what products are best for them and how to be more digitally savvy etc.

Telstra Regional Call Centre
Telstra has also established a specialised team to manage enquiries from regional and rural customers. They are able to redirect calls from customers who live more than 100km from a Telstra branded store to this specialised

team which has received additional training on our regional product set. This service is available from 9am to 9pm AEST. There is no special number to call. All customers need to do is call us on 13 22 20 and the system will redirect the call.

Trial of a mobile TGO unit

Telstra continue to support and work with ICPA at a State and Federal level. Our State Councillors were asked to trial a mobile TGO unit (a mobile antenna solution product). Tash is pictured on our ICPA (WA) magazine hosting an online State Council meeting from 'out bush Marble Bar' and I was able to send ICPA (WA) emails to State Council from the back paddock at 10pm in the North Eastern Wheatbelt, with one bar improved to three.

So once again technology and telecommunications help to keep members of rural and remote Australia engaged in volunteer advocacy hours, access to education and make it more equitable to stay living in the country.

Thank you to ICPA Federal Council for supporting all the State Councils. ICPA Federal Council support all the State Communication portfolio holders by hosting combined online meetings and distributing up to date information on developments.

ICPA (Aust) works closely with the Federal Government, telecommunications companies and communication stakeholders and is a member of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC). ICPA seeks the maintenance and development of adequate, affordable and reliable communications services for families in regional, rural and remote areas, particularly for the purpose of educational outcomes.