

PORTFOLIO REPORTS – STATE COUNCIL

Communications Report

Sally Brindal – Portfolio Holder, March 2020

Communications motions raised at the 2019 State Conference sought to have ICPA (WA) continue to lobby Telstra, the Minister for Regional Development and telecommunications service providers to ensure:

- the time taken to restore faults, and the entitlements for every working day of delay beyond an agreed date is within the Customer Service Guarantee Guidelines.
- the retention and maintenance of landline services in rural and remote areas, until another means of reliable, affordable and appropriate voice service is available, in rural and remote WA.

WA State Council raised these issues as communication motions at Federal Conference in 2019. In addition, motions were presented relating to:

- equity of internet access with adequate speed, quality, capabilities, download limits and costs
- all students enrolled in Distance Ed to have access to the Skymuster Ed port
- Sky Muster Ed port to have multicast capabilities
- video streaming for educational use to be included in future Sky Muster Plus plans
- Sky Muster Ed port to include tertiary students
- Sky Muster plus installation
- phone line installation and repair priority when for education
- supplier details for battery backup units for mains power nbn equipment
- VoIP as a back-up service

Federal Council attended the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition (RRRCC) meeting in Canberra. This was followed by a day of delegation meetings in Parliament House, with politicians, to discuss regional, rural and remote communication and connectivity issues.

SKYMUSTER EDUCATION PORTS:

Federal Council continues to follow up on concerns that not every distance education student can access an Ed Port. It does vary from state to state. In WA currently, if a student has a distance education student ID number they can apply for an Ed Port. If a student **does not** have a working service or access to the state provided service, they are eligible to apply for an Ed port. The process is as follows-

1. Contact a Skymuster provider with student ID number and request an Ed Port.
2. The provider will then apply to NBN for the service, NBN will investigate and ensure the ed provider service cannot be accessed for whatever reason.
3. NBN will then authorise the provider to supply the ed port.

<https://birraus.com/2016/02/28/what-is-the-nbn-sky-muster-educational-port/>

In WA the Education Department pay for student's internet only if enrolled in SOTA or SIDE.

If anyone knows of any families having trouble with this, please contact State Council and we will let Kristen Coggan (Federal Communications Portfolio Leader) know and she will contact NBN to escalate. She will need the student ID numbers, names and provider the family has applied through.

SKY MUSTER PLUS:

ICPA (WA) were approached by Jane McNamara, head of nbn local WA seeking families currently using nbn Sky Muster to be part of their Sky Muster Plus trial. Five families from the Kimberley to the Goldfields and in between took part in the three-month trail. nbn™ sought feedback in relation to any noticeable changes to download and upload speeds, dropouts and other improvements.

Sky Muster Plus is now available through a number of ISP providers. The big advantage for Regional, Rural and Remote users will be greater data capacity and data allowance exemptions for key functional uses of the nbn™ access network.

While the unlimited data for certain activities is welcomed (when the kids have used all your data) for things such as general web browsing, checking emails, common critical software updates for PC and smart phone operating systems, banking and visiting social media, there are some very specific limitations to what data is and isn't unmetered.

Web browsing – using HTTP or HTTPS protocols. Only text and static images are unmetered, not video and audio content. Downloads and uploads of text and imagery are also unmetered unless they are to or from cloud storage or file-sharing sites like Dropbox, YouTube or Spotify.

Social media

This only applies to text and static images on the following platforms:

- Facebook Facebook Messenger Instagram LinkedIn
- Snapchat Twitter WhatsApp

Email

This only applies to sending and receiving emails from the following services:

- Gmail Hotmail iCloud email Outlook.com
- Outlook 365 email Yahoo email

PC/smartphone updates

This applies only to operating system updates for the following systems:

- Android Apple iOS Apple OSX Huawei
- Linux Microsoft Windows

Any data routed through a [Virtual Private Network \(VPN\)](#) will be counted against your monthly cap, even if it falls into one of the above categories. Peer-to-peer file transfers are also metered, as is any video/audio streaming, online gaming and [Voice over IP \(VoIP\)](#) phone calls.

Gaming and video streaming will still contribute to data download allowances, and if the overall monthly limit is reached, the services will be slowed. The non-metred exemptions will continue to be delivered at wholesale download speeds. Unfortunately, unlike other NBN Co wholesale internet services, the Skymuster satellite service has regulated the data allowance that a dwelling can access with SkyMuster Plus plans still only having a maximum of 150GB of peak data. Hopefully, with rapid advances in technology some of the limitations will be decreased and potentially unlimited download plans.

ICPA (WA) would like to thank nbn™ Local for considering us to be a part of their trial program.

Skymuster installs

Did you know that there is no cost to have the hardware required for a Skymuster NBN™ internet service installed at your place? This government funded incentive is only guaranteed until 2020. ICPA Australia urges members to take advantage of this while they can. Information on providers and plans can be found [here](#).

<https://birraus.com/satellite/satellite-providers/>

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR OFF-PEAK DATA

Sky Muster™, along with many other ISPs, off-peak timings are between 1am to 7am every day. There are many ways to make the most of your off-peak data, without interrupting your sleep. Here are three ways to do it.

Install a Download Scheduler

One of the easiest things to do to make the most of your off-peak data is to check out the many download schedulers available online. Download schedulers work by allowing you to schedule large file downloads in off-peak hours. There are many free download schedulers available.

Synching Cloud-Based Applications

We all use a lot of cloud-based applications these days, such as drop box and google drive. There are ways to set your computer to schedule the synching of these cloud-based files at off-peak times, reducing your data usage during peak times. Instructions are included below:

All operating systems on all devices: <https://www.multcloud.com/tutorials/dropbox-schedule-sync-1234.html>

Google drive: https://www.maxsyncup.com/how_to/setup_google_drive.html

Windows: <https://www.howtogeek.com/123393/how-to-automatically-run-programs-and-set-reminders-with-the-windows-task-scheduler/>

Software Updates

Updates are another sure-fire way to eat into your usage allowance but are necessary to ensure your computer or mobile device is secure and running smoothly. The most popular operating systems will allow you to schedule updates for a later time. All you have to do is make the changes to your device. For instructions on how to reconfigure your software download preferences, have a look here:

For Apple IOS <https://iphone-tricks.com/tutorial/3869-how-to-install-ios-updates-overnight-automatically>

For Windows <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/4028233/windows-10-manage-updates>

MOBILE BLACK SPOT PROGRAM (MBSP) APPLICATIONS/ROUNDS:

Under round 4 of the MBSP Telstra will remove 131 network black spot locations. The locations will benefit from a mix of new mobile base stations and small cells. By the end of round 4 Telstra will have contributed over \$280 million and built more than 780 new sites. The Guidelines for Round 5 were released on Grant Connect on 5 April 2019 and the Grant Opportunity (GO2529) was opened for applications. Up to \$80 million in funding has been allocated for Round 5. Mobile Network Operators and Infrastructure Providers had until 26 July 2019 to submit their application.

TELSTRA 3G SERVICE CLOSURE

Telstra has announced that the 3G mobile network will be switched off in June 2024 to free up spectrum to make way for 5G. Between October 2019 and now, Telstra will have to upgrade its 4G coverage to ensure regional customers in an area totalling around 770,00 square kilometres across Australia do not lose network access. Although this is almost a third of the total area Telstra covers, currently 0.3% of the population has 3G only coverage.

There has been concern from members that 4G will not provide the coverage of 3G. However, WA State Council have been assured that Telstra will deliver like for like coverage when 3G is switched off. 5G is predominantly about larger metro/regional areas. 5G piggy backs off 4G and has no reliance on the 3G 850mhz spectrum. So 5G will be able to utilise that 850mhz to reach further afield.

All wireless communications rely on radio frequency or "spectrum" (measured in megahertz bands). Spectrum is a fixed resource. The amount available to use is determined by the physics of radio waves. Telcos buy access to "lots" of spectrum that they use to build their network, but once a band is full, that's it. We can't add more. As such, telcos have to make the most of the spectrum they have. For example, if a provider no longer runs 3G services on a certain band, it can redeploy that spectrum as faster 4G. Think of spectrum like a farm. You can change how you use your land - you could turn your apple orchard into a vineyard - but you can't plant outside of your property. Not a perfect analogy but hopefully provides some clarity.

ILLEGAL REPEATERS

Illegal repeaters continue to cause problems of intermittent mobile coverage for both Telstra and consumers. The best way to report issues is:

- Telstra page service status page. <https://outages.telstra.com.au/>
- Report on phone 13 22 03
- Regional page: www.telstra.com.au/regionalaustralia
- Reporting illegal repeaters: through faults line
- State Council/members can contact and ask directly

SIGNAL DROP OUT

Telstra has received, and members have raised, greater issues with call drop out. Congestion is one factor attributing to the issue with data usage increasing by 40% per annum. In addition to our reliance on mobile phones for calls and internet, there is an abundance of Internet of Things (IOT) that are also using the system. This includes things such as watches, sensors, weather stations, ear tags, water tanks etc. They do only require a lower speed of data and do not report back (ping) as often. Telstra continues to make improvements to its extension equipment (external antennas, TGO antennas etc) and the availability to customers at a rebated cost, in order to help extend coverage.

Telstra is continuing with the launch of its Mobile Satellite Small Cell solution which is funded by co-contributions from Telstra and the customer. 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 to tens of thousands. Unplanned mobile outages may result in additional issues, sometimes involving loss of significant transmission points. Smaller sites have banks of batteries all with life span and age variation, which impacts battery backup response times. Technicians may have to deal with extra issues when at site. Ideally there would be good battery back up at transmission sites.

SCAM WARNING

It seems that these scams are forever continuing. Members are advised that there are still a number of 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.

ICPA (WA) State Council met with Boyd Brown, Area General Manager WA and Naomi Evans, Regional Engagement Manager at our July face to face meeting. State Council would like to thank them for their willingness to meet with us and discuss the issues and concerns that are affecting our members.