

As a couple living near the township of Yackandandah, in the electorate of Indi we offer this case study.

We are a retired professionals (aged pensioners) living 30 kms from the nearest regional town Wodonga and 6 km from our local village of Yackandandah. The area is rural but quite densely settled, ie about a dozen homes within one km radius of our home. We have live on this small holding for almost 17 years and have always had a fixed line phone, internet connection and mobile phone.

These services are important to us for safety reasons - we are in a bushfire prone area, fires have been close to us three times here, health reasons - we are over 70 and are 30km from any after-hours service, family reasons – our children live over 300 kms away, and obviously business, eg banking, entertainment and information.

Our landline phone and internet services are with Telstra as only the provider who reached here. Our phone line is pair-gain copper and comes from the exchange 6km away. Initially the internet we had was dial up which was eventually replaced by wireless via an external aerial on the roof. The tower from which we get this signal is about 3 km as the crow flies.

We have very serious concerns about recent internet provision and NBN.

Concerning our current wireless service, the amount of download available and the cost are disproportionate and inadequate for even our small needs. We do not have the capacity to download movies or TV programs within our entitlement and would never watch a video clip of more than 2 mins. We pay \$50 for 8 Gb/mth plus we are required to have home phone line at ~\$14. Thus we are paying about \$8 per Gb. Gbs/mth have not changed in quite a few years. We cannot purchase more and often after two weeks all has been used. Service is then slowed and is unusable. Previously the amount available in this package moved up as both demands and size of downloads increased. Although we have turned off all automatic downloads we can, several cannot be turned off, so we can be ‘ambushed’ in our usage. Capacity needed for updates has grown markedly in recent years/months, but this has not been taken into consideration by providers who are seeing this as a residual service rather than a vital service for many regional/rural homes over the next years. Further the government expects us increasingly to use internet as a means of communication –Centrelink, ATO, census which adds to usage.

We could upgrade our plan to 15 Gb at a cost of around \$105/mth which still probably would not cover the growing system needs. However on a pensioner budget this is not feasible and not reasonable compared to what others pay. This provision and costs are at odds with urban households who get much more value for money. Urban NBN ~\$70 for 1000Gb and no phone costs!

Once we run out of Gbs our only options are going 6 kms to local library during office hours or using our again very limited mobile phone data. No local cafés have Wi-Fi.

At beginning of 2016 we had hopes that we would be moving to NBN as the very tower from which we receive our wireless signal had NBN equipment attached to it. However once the service came into operation some mysterious line on a map said we had to wait until a tower in another area about 12 kms away is built. How can the tower be accessed for one service and not another? We know the signal strength on our roof is suitable, as measured unofficially by a retailer, but seem to be blocked by some blind unswerving bureaucracy.

We are aware of satellite services but these are costly and believe these should be left for those

in truly remote areas. As demand grows these will reduce to the same issues people were experiencing before Skymuster, ie not a long term solution.

There are no providers interested in wireless to the home services apart from that via NBN service. No competition so take what you get. It is hard to get information when the product you require or the work needed to obtain it is not commercially viable for a seller, although for a lot of out of town rural but not remote people this is the only service available.

The underlying issues are: 1) there is not a 'fit for purpose' home wireless service, apart from NBN. It did exist once but this product has not been maintained appropriately in the market, and 2) NBN seems to be driven by bureaucracy from afar rather than local knowledge.

Thus the immediate and long term needs of regional and rural people are being ignored.

Heather and John Meyer