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Attn. Louise Gell,
Secretary,
Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts,
Australian Senate,
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Louise,

CEG are telecommunications consultants and have contacted a number of persons in the Metro CBD (who use telecommunication services in rural areas) and people who live and work in rural areas.

Attached are our comments on the Inquiry in to the Provisions of the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Regular Reviews and Other Measures) 2005 Bill.

I am willing to attend the Hearing on the 11th April 2005 to expand on the above and to present additional information, if required.

Yours sincerely,

Dr W.B. Green
Director.

Review Period

The group expressed the general view that rural services were still below acceptable levels and there was a lack of choice of mobile carriers.

This situation has arisen because of the slow and limited ability to define minimum acceptable services in rural areas. The proposed review period of five years is considered to be unacceptable and a more realistic period for reviews is three years for the following reasons:

- a) A minimum of two reviews are required to achieve a change, the first to determine the impact and need and the second to obtain community input and implement solutions i.e. a total six years instead of the proposed ten years. There are concerns that the current broadband service offerings will not meet the needs of the rural community in the near future.
- b) The rate of adoption of Technology by the community. Surveys such as the Telecommunications Needs Assessment by the Department of Industry and Resources(WA) have shown that the rural community are able to adopt and benefit from new technologies such as broadband in less than five years.

Representation

The group have the view that a majority of the members of the RTIRC should be from the rural areas or have a good working knowledge of rural issues. The clauses defining the membership (158T) of the RTIRC should be amended to ensure that a committee with a majority of carrier representatives be prevented from being appointed.

The purpose of the review is to consider rural interests and therefore the majority of representatives should represent the interests of the rural community.

Recommendations

It is recommended that;

- i) the period for review be changed from 5 years to 3 years
- ii) the majority of representatives of the RITRC have a knowledge of, or experience in matters affecting rural regional and remote parts of Australia..