

SUBMISSION TO THE

INQUIRY INTO THE ROLLOUT OF THE NBN

IN RURAL AND REGIONAL AREAS

from

Derek White

Dear Commissioners

I wish to make a brief submission to your inquiry into NBN Services in Regional and Rural Australia. The facts behind my submission are:

- We live at 17 Spencer Street, Mittagong in NSW on a semi-rural 1-acre block;
- We receive phone and Internet services via copper cables once owned by Telstra;
- We are approximately 1,000 metres from our Node;
- The phone and ADSL services prior to the installation of NBN were always problematic with numerous call-outs to Telstra technicians to fix problems;
- We have only lived here for 2.5 years but have had occasion to call technicians at least 4 times over that period. We also understand from the previous owners that they had call-outs on a number of occasions before we moved in;
- The most concerning issue has been the need to replace several sections of the copper cable – in some cases more than once (we understand that the cable from the street to our home has been replaced at least twice although the last occasion was probably due to an error in the sub-contractor's job sheet);
- We understand from talking to various technicians that Mittagong is a noted problem area for the roll-out of the NBN.

We had NBN installed in February 2017 and immediately noticed a drop off in performance compared to the ADSL service we previously had. We were advised by our RSP that this was not surprising as the “sync speed” on our line was only about 15 mBps while we had been seeing over 20 mBps down beforehand.

Even though we knew it was not technically achievable, we opted to take a 25/5 service after trying 12/1 and finding out that NBN seemed to cap the maximum speed we could achieve to around this level. Since then, we have seen up to around 14 mBps down and 4-5 up, but often less, and have continued to pay over the odds to get the best service we can.

We have queried whether we could get some other service such as wireless or satellite connections, but have been informed by NBN that we have a working service via copper so we are not eligible for these alternatives.

Over the past 12 months or so, we have been managing to survive despite the highly variable and generally quite slow speeds via the copper system. We have often had to wait for some time for streaming programs to buffer, and sometimes are unable to view streamed programs because the speed is just too slow. There has also been the odd outage. However, we had been sort of managing – albeit frustratingly.

Then about 8 days ago, we noticed a number of extended outages and the speed dropped to about 3-4 mBps down. We lodged a complaint with NBN and had a service call booked for the 19th of March 2018. The technician duly arrived and did a number of tests between our home and the Node.

His conclusions were:

- We are a surprisingly long way from the node;
- The latest replacement of the cable from our home to the street was badly done and one pair is unusable;
- There is at least one other section of the cable between our home and the node that needs replacing;
- He had to book a maintenance crew to come out and replace the cables;
- In the meantime, he completely disconnected the service;
- He felt there were a number of better technology options for our situation than the copper one.

Since then, we have not seen or heard anything from NBN. Admittedly there have been a few wet days in the interim, but no advice from NBN either directly or via the RSP as to when we might expect a crew to arrive. We have therefore been forced to use our mobile data services to remain connected with the world at a potentially onerous cost. That being said, we are achieving higher download speeds via the mobile phone than we ever did via copper.

We have enquired with our RSP as to whether there is any compensation for such a protracted interruption. They have readily agreed to reimburse us for the outage, but advise there is no ability to get NBN to provide compensation. How can it be reasonable for the perpetrator of the problem not to suffer any penalty? No wonder there is no urgency to fix it.

We have also engaged with NBN via Twitter to see what they are prepared to do to help us. They have said we can explore alternative technologies but it will cost us \$600 + GST to get an assessment done. Then we will be expected to pay for any alternative technology (likely to cost in the thousands of dollars) even though NBN is not achieving the legislated minimum speeds of 25 down and 5 up. How can this be right?

All of this seems to be a classic example of the behaviour of a monopoly who is not accountable, who refuses to engage directly with the ultimate customer, and who does not seem to be required provide any compensation or suffer any penalty for poor performance. Whoever came up with this model needs their head read.

I can't help thinking that NBN stand for "Not the Bloody Network"!

Derek White

27 March 2017

| Internet Speeds (Abridged) | More complete listing available | | | | | Ookla Down | Ookla Up | | |
|----------------------------------|--|-------|------|------|--|-----------------------------------|----------|----------------|---------|
| 09-Apr-17 | 6:29:00 PM | | | | | 12.64 | 4.76 | Ookla Best | |
| | 8:30:00 AM | | | | | 9.47 | 4.23 | AARNet | |
| | 4:20:00 PM | | | | | 12.80 | 4.70 | AARNet | |
| | 8:00:00 AM | | | | | 12.89 | 4.72 | AARNet | |
| | 12:20:00 PM | | | | | 12.90 | 4.70 | AARNet | |
| | 2:30:00 PM | | | | | 12.82 | 4.58 | AARNet | |
| | 5:15:00 PM | | | | | Couldn't connect to server | | | |
| | 6:22:00 AM | | | | | 12.44 | 4.47 | AARNet | |
| | 8:00:00 AM | | | | | Couldn't connect to server | | | |
| | 1:36:00 PM | | | | | Couldn't connect to server | | | |
| 10-Apr-17 | 2:53:00 PM | 21.90 | 2.97 | 3.14 | | Couldn't connect to server | | | |
| | 3:30:00 PM | 18.93 | 2.37 | | | Couldn't connect to server | | | |
| | 4:30:00 PM | | | | | 13.18 | 4.92 | AARNet | Started |
| | 7:35:00 AM | | | | | 13.24 | 4.78 | Ookla Best | |
| 11-Apr-17 | 1:30:00 PM | | | | | 12.68 | 5.09 | AARNet | |
| | 11:33:00 AM | | | | | 10.30 | 5.06 | | |
| | 2:20:00 AM | | | | | Internet down for extended period | | | |
| 08-Mar-18 | 7:17:00 AM | | | | | 3.32 | 2.25 | | |
| | 7:17:00 AM | | | | | Internet down for extended period | | | |
| 09-Mar-18 | 8:30:00 AM | | | | | 2.80 | 1.96 | Laptop & cable | |
| 10-Mar-18 | 10:00:00 AM | | | | | Internet down for extended period | | | |
| | 11:14:00 AM | | | | | 3.62 | 2.61 | | |
| 16-Mar-18 | 2:18:00 PM | | | | | 2.23 | 2.00 | Laptop & cable | |
| | 3:01:00 PM | | | | | 3.87 | 2.45 | | |
| | 8:47:00 PM | | | | | Could not connect | | | |
| | 8:50:00 PM | | | | | 3.09 | 2.78 | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | |
|-----------|----------|------|------|-----------------------------------|
| | 8:36:00 | | | |
| 17-Mar-18 | AM | 3.84 | 2.70 | |
| | 11:45:00 | | | |
| | AM | 2.79 | 2.17 | Laptop & cable |
| | 3:00:00 | | | |
| 18-Mar-18 | PM | 3.97 | 2.11 | Laptop & cable |
| | 11:17:00 | | | |
| | PM | | | |
| 19-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |
| 20-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |
| 21-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |
| 22-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |
| 23-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |
| 24-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |
| 25-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |
| 26-Mar-18 | | | | Internet down for extended period |