

NEED FOR IMPROVED MOBILE PHONE AND TELEVISION SIGNAL RECEPTION IN HUME

James Harker-Mortlock, independent candidate for the seat of Hume, commented today upon the need for improved mobile phone and television reception in the seat of Hume :

“Whilst there has been much talk about the need for improved broadband access to the internet around Australia, with much debate about how this should be done, far less has been said about the still well below acceptable levels of mobile communications and television reception in many rural and regional areas, including in Hume.

Having been involved in the telecommunications and information services industries for over thirty years, I have a keen interest in promoting the benefits of broadband. However, I realise that many people have far simpler needs. Whilst some people use the internet regularly, very many people use mobile phones a lot, and most people like to look at television.

However, mobile phone communications and television reception, taken for granted in the cities, are often still of very poor standard in the bush.

Rather than talking to the world, many people just want to talk to their children, to their neighbour, or, hopefully rarely, to the emergency services. There is no guarantee that they can do so with the current mobile phone network.

As more and more devices such as iPads and Androids are designed to combine voice and data traffic in a mobile environment, the need for adequate mobile communications becomes critical. People feel less and less tied to one spot and they are wanting to be more and more mobile.

The arrival of digital television has created another set of problems for many people in rural areas, especially older Australians. Television reception, something which most Australians regard as being as basic as electricity to their needs, is often sub-standard, or even unavailable, in many rural areas.

For example, Crookwell has for many years been included in the central and remote television zone, meaning that some residents have been able to view only the ABC. Hopefully this bureaucratic planning error is about to be rectified and steps taken to improve reception as a result of the efforts of Upper Lachlan Council.

Upper Lachlan Council has pointed out that the Federal Government’s VAST system – designed to provide access to digital television via a satellite signal – is less effective and more expensive to install than would have been hoped. Without a subsidy, the minimum cost of installing a VAST receiver is estimated to be about \$650, with a separate receiver being required for every television or recorder in a house. With digital television being rolled out across Australia, making digital television available to the residents of Hume at a reasonable price is a matter of urgency.

However, the digital television signal problem in Crookwell points to a wider issue - the need to get all communications services in Hume up to standard, including mobile phone and television reception, not just broadband. Given that large parts of Hume are located within a comparatively short distance from the nation’s capital, the current situation is unacceptable.

As communications is primarily a federal government responsibility, I commit to working with local and state government representatives in fighting for improved and affordable communications services in the electorate if elected to represent the seat of Hume at the next federal election. “

For more information, please contact :

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