

Palmato, Peter

From: Irene Lewis [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 4 August 2022 8:05 PM
To: RMII
Subject: submission for Mobile / coverage for natural disasters

Hello

I would like to put in this as a submission for the Regional Mobile Infrastructure inquiry.

I live in the remote isolated community of Dartmouth, located in the Mitta Valley in NE Victoria, close to Dartmouth Dam. We are about 90 minutes from Wodonga, on a one-way road surrounded by forest. The community only has about 125 houses with about half of these owned by older permanent residents.

We have only had a mobile Telstra tower in our community for about 6 year – this was funded in part by the local community to the tune of \$10,000. Many visitors do not have any coverage if they are with Optus or similar providers. Coverage is only in town and does not cover the lake which is used mostly by recreational fishes for boating and fishing, so we would have no immediate way of notifying of serious accidents or injury were they to happen on or around the Lake.

We lose coverage when there are power outages as was the case last night when lines came down in storms so no coverage (mobile or internet) for twelve and a half hours and no way of contacting emergency services or getting medical help if it were needed. Most residents use the vast satellite systems for television coverage and have little to no radio reception due to the depth of the valley, so communication of any kind is very limited.

In 2003 bushfires, when fire crossed Dartmouth Road and isolated the township, fire came to the town's outskirts and our only fire unit 10 kilometres away unable return, leaving our residents and local farmers in a very precarious position.

This circumstance is a real threat every summer, and our community is working hard to increase our infrastructure and find ways to protect our town by providing additional services, such as upgrading our community hall, building an amenity block for emergency personnel's use, and hopefully winning a grant to provide fuel, all this in our "place of last resort precinct"

At this moment in time, if we were again cut off as in 2003, and lost power, the town would have no fuel for CFA use, no way of escape, no way to find out what threats were approaching and no way to reach help.

The tower has a 6-battery backup system of which only one battery is functioning so its life is very limited. If we receive the fuel Pod grant we would have difficulty as its systems use mobile service to run and although we would purchase a generator to use for back up power its use would be limited.

In our normal daily life, we encounter many black spots through out the Valley and internet services in many locations are unreliable at best.

I am sure we are not an isolated case in a remote rural region, but it is the twenty first century and regional communities deserve better services especially in times of emergency.

I would hope you would take this submission into account in your deliberations.

Irene Lewis
Dartmouth community member
[REDACTED]