

Submission to the  
**Australian Competition and Consumer Commission**

on the  
**Mobile Roaming Inquiry**

From T & L Sudlow

[REDACTED]  
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November 2016

My husband Tony and I operate two mixed farming partnerships in the Midwest of Western Australia. Like many rural families across Australia, we are involved and hold executive positions in a number of local community groups. As well as these, Tony is the President of the Midlands Cattle Breeders' Association (an area between Perth and Geraldton in Western Australia) and is the State Chairman of WA Angus. I am currently the Western Australian State President of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association.

We live less than 5 kms from the NWC Hwy and are fortunate to have access to good mobile coverage which is vital to enable us to run our business, communicate and contribute to the community.

**How important is mobile coverage to you? Are you willing to pay slightly more for services on a network that has more extensive coverage in regional and remote areas?**

Mobile coverage is one of the most important issues for us and for other members of our community. Like all Australians, we desire equity of access as a basic requirement, in the provision of telecommunication services. Lack of sufficient mobile coverage does impact some people in our broader Midwest region, although thanks to the on-going improvements in mobile service availability in our region, this is improving. Suitable mobile coverage is vital when trying to conduct business and at a safety level when driving long distances for family, educational or business purposes. We do currently pay more for this than our urban counterparts.

**What are the most important factors to you when choosing or switching between mobile service providers?**

We don't have a choice of providers and our most important consideration is coverage. Mobile companies who are making investments in the latest mobile technology and in their own network infrastructure in regional areas have our endorsement.

**Are you satisfied with the range of mobile services (including prices) available to you? Please explain the reasons for your answer.**

We are satisfied with the current mobile service available to us, although we would always be keen to see further reductions in the price and increase in data inclusion, so that it is more equitable with our urban counterparts. We acknowledge that improvements have and are being made repeatedly for us, by our provider. We receive excellent support from our provider.

**Do you have access to 4G services? How important is it to you to have access to the latest mobile technology?**

We do have access to 4G technology. Having access to the latest mobile technology is essential for reasons already mentioned. Without the best possible mobile technology, rural communities will continue to suffer and decline. It is vital that mobile companies continue to invest in the latest mobile technology.

**Do you think that requiring mobile network operators to provide roaming to each other is a good thing?**

We feel very strongly that requiring mobile network operators to provide roaming to each other would not be a good thing. It would destroy incentives to keep mobile providers investing in their networks and could significantly jeopardise future upgrades in technology and coverage. It should be noted that there are many areas of regional Australia that still require additional mobile coverage. It is likely that allowing shared roaming would increase the cost of mobile coverage for rural Australians.

The majority of Western Australia is sparsely populated and allowing mobile network operators to provide roaming to each other would considerably erode the commercial benefit to the companies who have already heavily invested in infrastructure. We may not have a choice of provider and circumstances may not be ideal for us compared to our urban counterparts, but the current regulations provide us with coverage, with support and with the best options into the future.

It is vital that the current strong competitive incentives to continue investing are preserved. The best way to deliver greater choice is to encourage mobile companies to invest in their own network infrastructure in regional areas. The companies who choose to invest in rural and remote Australian mobile infrastructure need to be provided with the incentive to continue.

Liz Sudlow

24 November 2016

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