
From: Walter Pasquali [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 29 June 2022 11:59 AM
To: Merger Authorisations
Subject: Telstra & TPG Merger

Dear Sir/Madam

The purpose of my email today is as a small business owner, to raise my concerns regarding the proposed Telstra and TPG merger.

I have worked and invested the majority of my career in the telecommunications industry, firstly as an electrical tradesperson and then as a Technical Trainer and Workplace Assessor in the Telecommunications industry (Over 30 Years), albeit with Optus. I have been exposed to the industry in both the technology and regulatory side, as well as innovative products and services in the infancy of the deregulation era.

I am now a regional small business owner of 4 locations across Regional North East Victoria and Southern NSW. I am the owner and operator of four (4) Optus Shops. They are located in Wangaratta, Albury, Wodonga & Wagga Wagga. I would estimate the population footprint of approx. 500,000 people across these territories, this is not including the huge numbers of visitors and spectators to snowfields, food & wine regions, community sport, major events, & festivals conducted in these areas all year round.

People in regional inherently travel a significant proportion of their daily life for work & pleasure, both in and around their area, to and from capital cities & constantly demand a reliable telecommunications network at an affordable price. Optus is one of the major telecommunications providers that competes with Telstra & offers the full suite of access to small business & consumers in regional, via a proper retail presence, online access, over the phone & digital support in a meaningful & significant way when compared to Telstra. The choice for telecommunications in regional may appear competitive, however a significant proportion of people in regional are currently reluctant to switch providers due to a perceived major network difference. This merger will further enhance this perceived position & Telstra's ability to retain and gain customers in all commercial markets, which will broaden the gap between the major telecommunications players!

Optus has invested significant capital into the maintenance and growth of their network in recent years and requires continued monitoring to ensure we keep up with the demands of our consumers. The likely outcome will be to retract & protect market share in metropolitan areas and reduce network investments where there is a lack of competition, in regional. This will have a massive negative impact in regional, regarding job opportunities in the whole telecommunications industry with less competition.

To keep jobs and skills in Australia & maintain a competitive landscape across the telecommunications industry in Australia, a significant strategy to improve competition and choice for customers across all products and services must be maintained in Regional Australia. This merger will provide Telstra with further access to network spectrum and technology to grow their current network into a more dominant position, making the network gap grow in an unprecedented way.

The growth of the network gap in regional could propel the market into a monopoly situation and further reduce investments by Telstra where a lack of competition exists!

Telecommunications Technology is a fast paced industry and the dominance of a telecommunications carrier can reduce and inhibit innovation and adoption of new products and services in the industry, Australia wide.

This merger should therefore be rejected and not allowed to proceed.

Please feel free to contact me if required.

Regards

Walter Pasquali
Managing Director | Retail Franchisee

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Yes Optus Wangaratta

Yes Optus Albury

Yes Optus Wodonga

Yes Optus Wagga Wagga