



Regional Telecommunications Review
Submission
2021

Introduction

Wattle Range Council, the heart of the Limestone Coast in the South East of South Australia, covers an area of roughly 4,000 square kilometres stretching from the Coast to the Victorian Border. Wattle Range Council incorporates the seaside towns of Beachport and Southend, extends inland to Millicent as the major service centre and also easterly across to the historic town of Penola and world renowned wine region of Coonawarra.

The Council region produces a huge array of products for both local and export markets including beef, prime lambs, wool, herbs, rock lobster, wine, blue gums and pinus radiata for processing, potatoes, apples, native flowers, onions, dried milk, live herbs, milk production and a diverse range of small seeds.

The area also includes Kimberly-Clark Australia's Millicent Paper Mill, Timber Processing Mill at Kalangadoo, Midfield Group, United Dairy Products, Blue Lake Dairies and Hollafresh herbs and produce.

The area consists of many major tourist attractions including the Elgin Valley and renowned Coonawarra Vineyards, Penola Historic Town and Petticoat Lane, Mary MacKillop Penola Centre, Beachport and Southend seaside townships, Millicent Historic Museum, Historic Glencoe Woolshed, Tantanoola Caves, Canunda National Park, Woakwine Cutting, Lake George, Penola's John Riddoch Interpretive Centre and Heritage Walk, Greenrise Lake and Recreation Area, Lake McIntyre Conservation Area & the Tantanoola Tiger

The Lake Bonney and Canunda Wind Farm developments overlooking Lake Bonney comprise 135 wind turbines. These, and many others, are all exciting ventures and Wattle Range Council is considered a productive and progressive Council, particularly in the Primary Production Industry.



Telecommunication services in the Wattle Range Council is a hot topic which sparks passionate discussion amongst our constituents. This was evidenced recently, when Council released an online survey seeking feedback on Mobile Phone Coverage across our Council. The purpose of this survey was to gather data to assist with accessing Mobile Black Spot funding through the telecommunications providers. Council released the survey for a period of four weeks and received 609 responses, a staggering result equating to over 5% of the Council population.

Council has also recently facilitated community meetings in both Maaoupe and Mount McIntyre in response to community angst about black spots.

Information received from the recent community meetings and the survey responses informs the content of this submission.

Telecommunications Adequacy in the Wattle Range Region

"Mobile services are available to 99.5 per cent of Australia's population and 33 per cent of the Australian landmass" (Regional Telecommunications Review 2021 Issues Paper).

Clearly, whilst Mobile Services are available in most of the Wattle Range Council area, these services are largely inadequate. Any areas outside of the immediate vicinity of the major towns of Millicent and Penola experience constant dropouts and localised black spots. We asked our constituents to rate their phone service and the results were an average of a 2 star rating (described as minimal coverage, one or two bars that drop in and out or similar).

Out of 4, how would you rate your mobile phone service at this location?

Answered: 594 Skipped: 15

2.0★
average rating



	TERRIBLE. NO SERVICE AT ALL.	MINIMAL. ONE OR TWO BARS THAT DROP IN AND OUT (OR SIMILAR)	OKAY. THOUGH IT DOES DROP OUT FROM TIME TO TIME (OR SIMILAR)	FINE. MY MOBILE PHONE SERVICE HAS FULL FUNCTIONALITY.	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
★	15.66% 93	68.86% 409	14.48% 86	1.01% 6	594	2.01

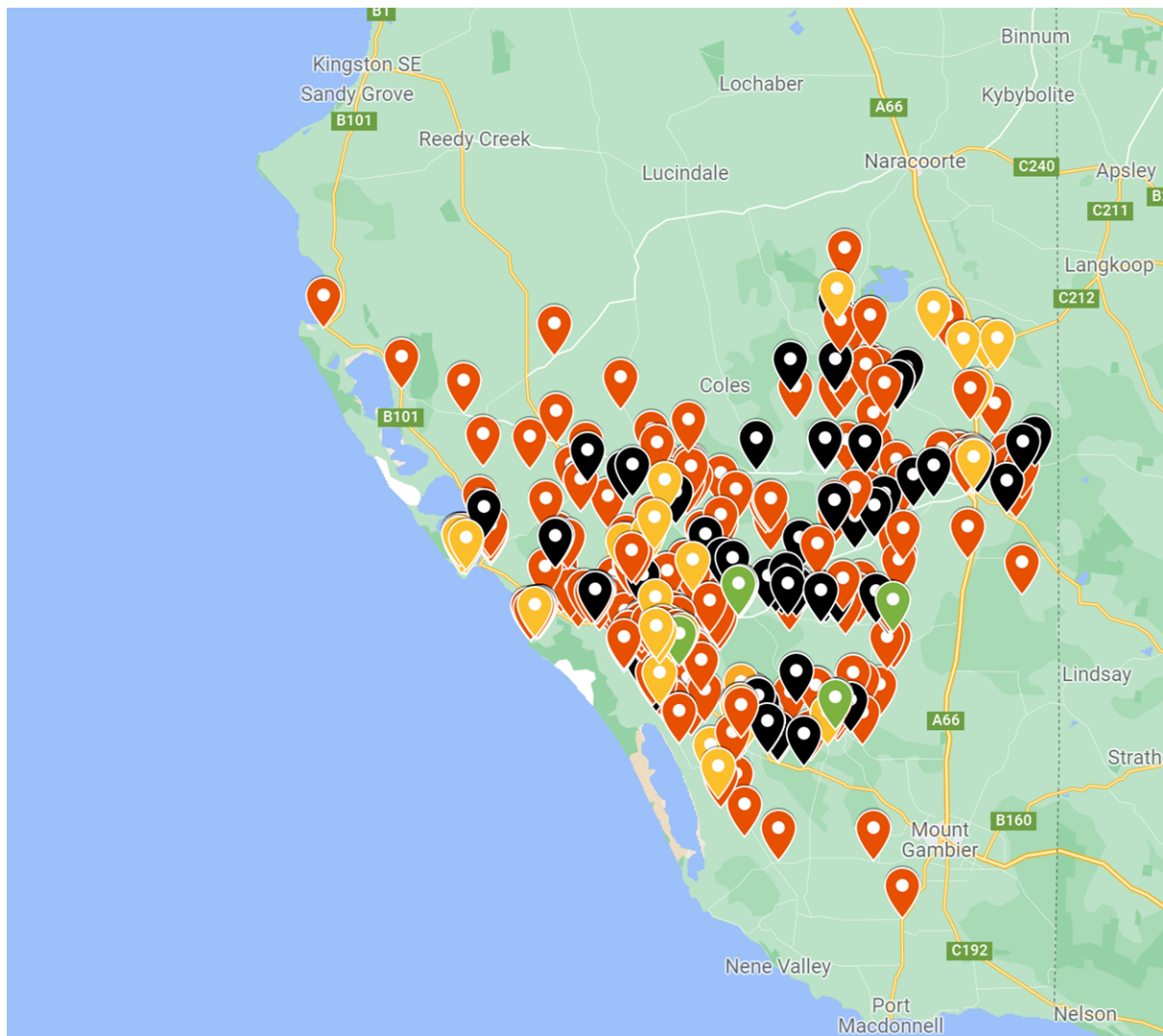
[Comments \(263\)](#)


"It's an absolute joke. Lucky to get 2 bars of 3G. Phone calls constantly drop out/disconnect" Kristyn Jones, Glencoe


"Have to put the phone on the window to get two bars of 3G anywhere else there's nothing" Dallas Skeer, Furner


"Sometimes our eftpos machine will not process sales" Anonymous, Penola


Council has mapped the results of the survey to try and identify any patterns or specific areas of concern. The results indicate that the issue of inadequate services is widespread across the Council area. The vast majority of respondents reported localised blackspots on their properties which result in regular dropping out of services.



 Terrible, no service at all

 Minimal, one or two bars that drop in and out (or similar)

 Okay, though it does drop out from time to time (or similar)

 Fine, my mobile service has full functionality

In addition to the widespread, localised dropouts, there are several small communities who have voiced their concerns about permanent blackspots.

Maaoupe Blackspot

On the 11th of March, 2021 the community residents of Maaoupe called a community meeting to discuss their ongoing concerns with mobile phone coverage in their area. Maaoupe is a sparsely populated farming region. This meeting was attended by about 50 local farmers along with representatives from Telstra and Optus, the State Member for MacKillop, Nick McBride and Federal Member for Barker, Tony Pasin. The attendees at this meeting voiced the following concerns:

- At least 2x CFS sheds that don't have service
- Turning off 3G is a major concern, as this is the only network that coverage is obtained
- Landlines are not reliable
- Technology is not available to use such as EFT transactions inhibits Economic Development
- Social and emotional wellbeing – farming is an isolated life and communication outside of the home is vital for mental health
- The frustration of paying for a service that is not received (mobile phone plans)

Despite this meeting being attended by everyone who has the power to make a mobile phone tower possible (Telecommunication Providers, State Government Representatives and Federal Government Representatives), the process by which these farmers could put forward their case for a tower was not clearly articulated. The Federal Member said that it was the Telecommunication Providers who would need to be approached, yet these providers couldn't describe exactly what would be required for an application/expression of interest, what the process would be, what funding commitments would need to be sourced or how competing blackspot locations would be prioritised.

The telecommunication providers gave demonstrations of equipment and technology that may be able to assist the farmers, such as booster antennas and the like, however these would be at an additional cost to the farmers. This was met with frustration for customers who are already paying for mobile phone services they do not receive.

23 farmers from the Maaoupe area completed the recent survey. There was not a single respondent from that area who receives adequate mobile coverage. Some of the responses that sum up the concerns and frustrations of this community are highlighted below:

Out of 4, how would you rate your mobile phone service at this location?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



	TERRIBLE. NO SERVICE AT ALL.	MINIMAL. ONE OR TWO BARS THAT DROP IN AND OUT (OR SIMILAR)	OKAY. THOUGH IT DOES DROP OUT FROM TIME TO TIME (OR SIMILAR)	FINE. MY MOBILE PHONE SERVICE HAS FULL FUNCTIONALITY.	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
★	26.09% 6	65.22% 15	8.70% 2	0.00% 0	23	1.83

[Comments \(9\)](#)

"Over the 25 years I have lived and owned property in Maaoupe the lack of mobile phone service has impacted me in many ways. Over recent time- the Lucindale fire in summer has had adverse affect on me. This fire was headed in our direction out of control. I was in a paddock and unable to contact anyone and no one was able to contact me. I am unable to set up modern day sprinkler systems that I could have put on remotely etc. the risk of fire has a huge mental affect of small communities such as Maaoupe. Another recent incident was a hay stack fire 5km from my house when I got back into service I had 5 or 6 voicemails to make sure we were okay as people could see smoke. We have a high

agriculture, forestry area around our farm. A black spot funded road has no phone service which is a major road between towns that is of high productivity in this area. People are not using this access because they are unable to reach assistance if required. The mental health is incredible. It also draws people away from the area and travelling through” Peter and Sue Wooding, Maaoupe

“I was in Robe when the Lucindale fire took off. Watching the smoke direction & CFS updates, I tried calling my son who was on the farm at Maaoupe. His phone went to Messagebank, as well as 3 neighbours & my tenant I tried to ring. I drove from Robe to Maaoupe at 150 km/h to find my son & tenant to alert them of the major risk coming” Michael Palm, Maaoupe

“We have missed sales during harvest times of our crops, we have missed sales and purchases of stock particularly now that so much of this is done online/over the phone with agent etc. last year alone we missed booking in cattle several times to be sold. This decreasing our income and then what we can spend in the economy. The farming industry is becoming more and more online and crucial when auditing properties and using technology to improve stock tagging and scanning. We are unable to use any of this new technology to monitor stock and record information as there is no service at all at our main cattleyards to be able to set this up” Christie, Maaoupe

Mount McIntyre Blackspot

On Tuesday 1st June 2021, about 15 farmers from the Mount McIntyre area arranged a community meeting with Council to discuss their black spot concerns. The meeting notes included:

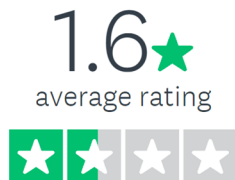
- Paying for a phone service but not able to access
- Services not reliable
- You can get service 10m up in the air, but not on the ground
- CFS – no information. Cant ring out,
- 3G Telstra smart box – works near Mt Burr, but won’t work in town
- One customer spent roughly \$8K for boosters that only work at the buildings
- Some people are getting booster boxes at no cost – inconsistencies
- New tower in Kalangadoo was installed in the wrong location
- Have to permanently set phones to 3G so that it doesn’t revert to half a bar of 4G
- Everybody in the room is in business, it is impacting the local and regional economy
- One customer takes a stack of bills to the pub when going for dinner to pay online
- Disadvantaged because we need a landline in addition to a mobile – cant give up the landline in the case of a bushfire.
- We are in a worse position now than prior to Ash Wednesday, as some people now don’t have landlines and of those that do, many are dependent on electricity which is often cut in an emergency
- CFS Volunteer called to a fire, goes to the CFS shed, if no one is there, needs to go home or to an area of service to round up a crew, who could also get to the shed in the meantime. It’s inefficient and unsafe and waste valuable time in the event of a bushfire
- It seems simple putting a tower on the top of Mt McIntyre, as the other towers are visible from there
- Originally the Mt Burr tower was meant to come to Mt McIntyre, but there was an incident in Mt Burr, so it got diverted there
- The NBN data mapping data on the website is incorrect
- Can the redundant technology being pulled out of the larger cities (3G/4G) be repurposed here?
- Needs to cover from Mt Burr Rd to Manga

- Kids need access to decent internet for school
- Couldn't respond to an Airbnb request due to lack of service

23 people from Mount McIntyre completed the recent survey. Like Maaoupe, not a single respondent has adequate phone coverage, however there were not any respondents who consider their mobile coverage 'Okay' either:

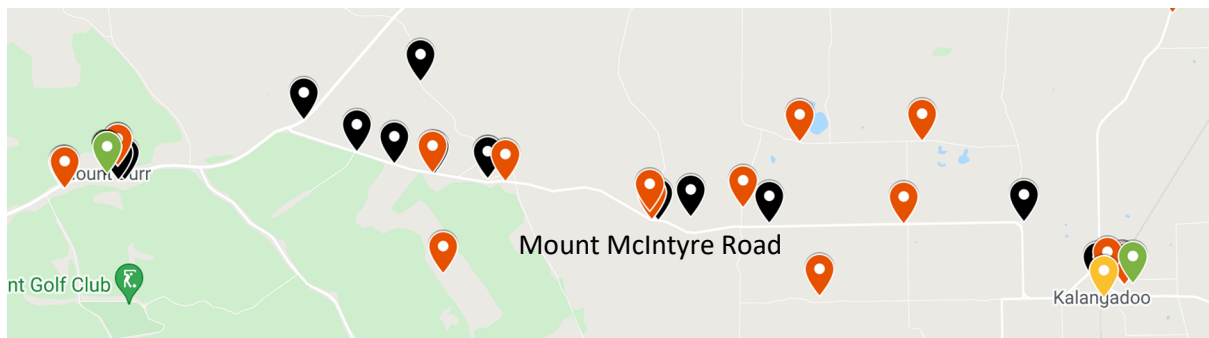
Out of 4, how would you rate your mobile phone service at this location?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



	TERRIBLE. NO SERVICE AT ALL.	MINIMAL. ONE OR TWO BARS THAT DROP IN AND OUT (OR SIMILAR)	OKAY. THOUGH IT DOES DROP OUT FROM TIME TO TIME (OR SIMILAR)	FINE. MY MOBILE PHONE SERVICE HAS FULL FUNCTIONALITY.	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
★	43.48% 10	56.52% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	23	1.57
Comments (11)						

When looking at how the results for Mount McIntyre were mapped, the properties experiencing Black Spots and minimal phone service clearly follow Mount McIntyre Road, which is a very narrow road highly frequented by semi-trailer logging trucks. Something that the community was gravely concerned about:



📍 Terrible, no service at all

📍 Minimal, one or two bars that drop in and out (or similar)

📍 Okay, though it does drop out from time to time (or similar)

📍 Fine, my mobile service has full functionality

"The road is dangerous with log trucks – not big enough for 2x log trucks to pass each other – yet it is a service road. Edging of the road is not strong enough to hold the trucks. It's only a matter of time before a major accident occurs and there will be no phone service for an emergency response"

Farmer, Mount McIntyre Community Meeting

Furner Blackspot

The residents of the Furner area, a sparsely populated farming region, have also previously expressed their frustrations to Council about the mobile blackspots. The survey results gave evidence to these frustrations:

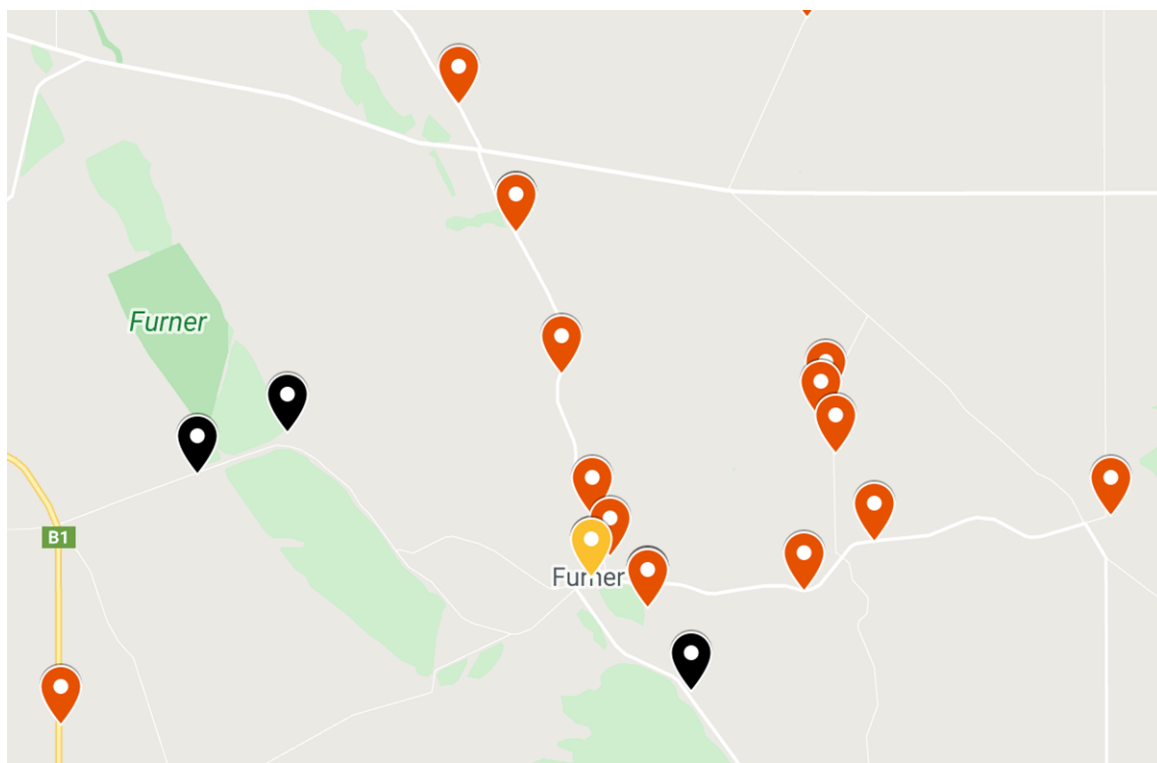
Out of 4, how would you rate your mobile phone service at this location?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 1



	TERRIBLE. NO SERVICE AT ALL.	MINIMAL. ONE OR TWO BARS THAT DROP IN AND OUT (OR SIMILAR)	OKAY. THOUGH IT DOES DROP OUT FROM TIME TO TIME (OR SIMILAR)	FINE. MY MOBILE PHONE SERVICE HAS FULL FUNCTIONALITY.	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
★	11.11% 3	85.19% 23	3.70% 1	0.00% 0	27	1.93

[Comments \(12\)](#)



Terrible, no service at all



Minimal, one or two bars that drop in and out (or similar)



Okay, though it does drop out from time to time (or similar)



Fine, my mobile service has full functionality

"It had a large impact on the CFS service a few days ago when the accident that occurred on Princess Highway Furner. I found out 30 minutes after returning home a call came through for CFS truck call out, but due to poor service along Furner road I did not receive call! Not impressed!" Ron Figg, Furner

Beachport Peak Season Dropouts

Beachport is one of the major tourist destinations in the Wattle Range region. The seaside village has a population of just 652 people, however over summer and peak holiday periods, there is an influx of visitors and the population swells in the thousands.

The survey received 96 responses from Beachport residents, this equates to almost 15% of the permanent population. The common theme among these responses was the unreliable phone and internet coverage over peak periods. The lack of phone coverage in a major tourist destination seriously affects the tourism industry. Tourism operators are disadvantaged and ill equipped to provide an adequate level of service. Tourists are unable to use their phones in their usual way. Businesses are impacted by unreliable eftpos and lost business transactions. All of this results in visitors being unsatisfied with certain aspects of their holiday and less likely to return Beachport.

"Can be very difficult in Summer-Time to get service when all the holiday makers are here" Peter Burdon, Beachport

"Very minimal service and then on weekends, school holidays and over summer it becomes terrible or non-existent. I did continual speed checks for a while and was getting under 0.5 Mbps Downloads for mobile data!! So, pretty much 0 Mbps. I ran a 15 staff business from Beachport and have now moved the office out of the council area due to continual phone and data drop-outs." Melissa Reilly, Total Therapy Solutions, Beachport

"We stay here for 4 weeks every February windsurfing, every day it is super frustrating trying to do internet banking, bookings etc" Anonymous, Beachport

"In January, I could not get a usable data rate and most of the time could not even make a phone call with Telstra" Andrew Daff, Beachport

Inequality

Inadequate telecommunications disadvantage the people who live in the Wattle Range region. The inequality is measurable in many aspects of the regional resident's life in comparison to their city counterparts. For example, Wattle range constituents pay the same amount for phone and internet plans, however the level of service received is much less than those who live in the city. Additionally, many residents are forced to pay thousands of dollars for booster antennas just to receive a phone signal. At a Local Government level, Councils are left with competing priorities for funding streams such as the Regional Connectivity Program, where we need to choose between applying for funding to address mobile blackspots rather than trialling innovative technologies or expanding fibre NBN. City counterparts do not have this issue. City residents and Local Government entities are clearly advantaged by the market-based approach to the provision of telecommunication services.

"Its very poor when I can see the tower from our house. We have contacted the tower company who just told us to get a booster. The tower would be only about 8 kms away! We pay Telstra well for a service which we in the rural sector miss out. When in Adelaide I cannot believe how quick internet is. So some money from Telstra seriously needs to be spent in rural area as it affects businesses and also children's learning capacity when doing school work at home" Ron Figg, Furner

"..As an example, this survey has dropped out about 7 times and I have resorted to driving to another road just to complete this! This is the situation day after day with missing important calls, having calls drop out all the time, restricted and intermittent internet access for fulfilling what is seen as everyday tasks by people with the LUXURY of even 2 bars constant 4G" Kristyn Jones, Glencoe

Impact on Community Safety

The inadequate telecommunication service has a serious impact on community safety. The main concerns in the Wattle Range Region include:

- **Bush Fire Safety:** There is genuine fear of an adequate response in a Bush Fire Event. This includes:
 - Lack of mobile phone reception at CFS stations, such as Mount McIntyre
 - The inability for CFS Captain and volunteers to be notified of fires
 - The inability for volunteer fire fighter to communicate with fire trucks
 - The inability for warnings about imminent fire threat to be communicated effectively which puts lives at risk
 - Bushfires often take out electricity supply, which means the only method of communication at some properties, being Wi-Fi calling and VoIP services are also ceased
- **Accidents and Emergencies:** The lack of mobile phone coverage across our region significantly increases the risks to health and safety in the event of an accident or an emergency. This is exacerbated in the Wattle Range region, where there is an ageing population with 28.9% of constituents are aged over 60 (2016 Census)
 - There are multiple examples in our survey responses of people needing to travel away from the scene of an accident or emergency to obtain mobile phone coverage to seek assistance. This increases the response time and puts the sick/injured at further risk
 - On-call nurses in our region are unable to be reliably contacted in the event of an emergency
- **Personal Safety**
 - Users of the local school bus service are particularly at risk. In our region, children are picked up on the side of the road from an intersection on a pre-determined route. Parents or carers are required to meet the school bus to pick up and drop off children. With the current inadequate telecommunication service, there is no means for communication between the bus, parents and the school should delays, breakdowns or an accident occur. This risks children being left on the side of the road without supervision.
 - Vehicles that breakdown in blackspots are unable to call for assistance. Vehicle users have found themselves walking alone, on the side of 110km/hour roads in the dark to obtain phone service

"If there was a bushfire, we'd lose our property or perish if a phone call was the only way of notification. Same goes for if there was a farm or car accident - you'd be crossing your fingers that it happened in an area of even one bar of 4G range" Kristyn Jones, Glencoe

"My dad has just passed away and the months leading up we could not get any phone reception to call an ambulance until driving away to find some reception" Michael Sayer, Mount Burr

"If there is no service how can we be contacted. What if we need to phone an ambulance or one of our children are sick/ or had an accident, how can we be contacted by the school or employers. Not good enough" Anonymous, Millicent

"Most people live out of town limits like myself, I've had 2 angina attacks was unable to ring family members for help" Marianne D'Aniello, Tamtanoola

"The CFS use apps on phones for call outs with no service means no emergency services. It also prevents any calls to emergency services" Anonymous, Furner

"In 2020 there was a small fire less than 5km from my house in a hay stack. I was another 3km away from my house toward Millicent. I had no idea until I got to the very top of a hill and 5 voicemails came through to alert us. I was 8km from the fire. Our house is 30km from Lucindale fire ground, we were unable to contact home as they were in paddocks with no phone service, unable to get alerts on phones unable to contact CFS it goes on - that fire was coming quickly... My children both suffer from croup and have had trouble breathing - who knows if I will be able to ring an ambulance or not... Working on a farm bring considerable risk for accidents - no service means no help. It's scary and way behind acceptable in today's day and age" Christie, Maaoupe

"When someone gets injured in cattle yards and can't use his phone to call 000 and it drops out 4 times while trying to get help it is NOT good enough!! His safety is worth more than the cost of an extra tower!!" Belinda, Tantanoola

"Recently my wife who has Parkinson's had a fall and damaged her hip. She was unable to make contact to anyone until I found her seven hours later after the fall. I then had to travel some distance to neighbours to call an ambulance" Harry Altschwager, Mount McIntyre

"Les had an accident on quad, was found, but couldn't use a phone to call the ambulance. Had to run back to the house on foot. Couldn't dial triple 0. Then ambulance couldn't find them – and no way to contact" Farmer at Mt McIntyre Community Meeting

Impact on the Local Economy

"I have had prospective employees turn down a employment offer and others leave because there isn't a reliable phone service" Peter Phillips, Maaoupe

"I have missed grain pricing opportunities and livestock pricing events as often these occur only for short periods of time and I don't get service all the time" Peter Phillips, Maaoupe

"I have not been able to complete purchases or check in because there was no reception, which also impacted EFTPOS and telephone service - greatly limiting the store's operation" Anonymous, Millicent

"...We run an emergency equine veterinary clinic so we need reliable service" Simon Ellul, Penola

"Sensor technologies required for proper crop and animal care when not on property all the time don't work, or don't work properly. IOT devices.....When 3g is turned off there will be significant black spots between towns. A booster is currently required on 3g, and there is no 4G at all" Anonymous, Penola

"A tourist attraction with constant public visitors adjacent to this address has no mobile service at all (Tantanoola Caves)" Geoff Hill, Tantanoola

Some of the impacts on Tourism were mentioned above in the 'Beachport Peak Season Dropouts' section. In addition to this, Wattle Range's 'Adventure Tourism' industry is also adversely impacted. Our region has many high-risk tourism activities, such as cave diving, four-wheel driving through the sand dunes, surf schools, paddle boarding, Enduro racing etc. Yet, many of these activities, particularly the cave diving and four-wheel driving occur in blackspot areas (Canunda Frontage,

Tantanoola). Inadequate telecommunications increase the risks associated with these activities and inhibits growth in tourism opportunities.

Wattle Range businesses, particularly Farms, are technologically disadvantaged due to inadequate telecommunications. Current technological advances, such as the 'Internet of Things' have the potential to improve efficiencies in farming across our region, however this sort of technology is so far out of the reach of a Farmer who is unable to learn how to use a basic App on their phone, simply because they don't have adequate coverage to do so. As technology continues to advance, the gap in technological aptitude will continue to widen, thus further disadvantaging our regional businesses.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a 'tree change' movement across Australia with a shift in working practices that allows for greater flexibility and working from home arrangements. The Wattle Range region has been unable to capitalise on the tree-change movement due to the limited availability of high-speed NBN outside of the small footprint of the Millicent, Beachport and Penola townships.

3G networks are also still widely used across our farming communities due to the inadequacy of all other networks. There is genuine fear about this network being decommissioned without any assurance that the 4G or 5G networks will exactly replicate the 3G footprint.

Impact on Social and Emotional Wellbeing

The primary producers of the Wattle Range region work in an isolated environment to put food on the tables of all Australians. Communication and connectedness are vital for our farmers, however inadequate telecommunications only exacerbates the existing isolation. The responses from the recent survey demonstrate that the inadequate telecommunications in the Wattle Range region are having a tangible impact on the social and emotional wellbeing of our community:

"Moving from Adelaide to Maaoupe I have found the isolation of having very limited phone service at time very confronting. In times of high fire danger I have been unable to contact my family at home (Adelaide) I have felt scared, isolated and out of touch with my community. I have at times wished to move away because of these feelings and still 6 years on have times that I feel like this and the impact that has on me is huge. It's isolating, it's scary and I feel unsafe. When visitors come to our farm, if they are with certain phone services they have no forms of communication, which has been said how annoying that is. They are unable to let family know they are safe and in turn they don't want to come to the area. Which then increases the mental health of current residents" Christie, Maaoupe

"I have severe depression and when needing to help me with my depression, and unable to talk with special support services I'm enrolled with has made my illness worse as they aren't able to help me get through the attack I'm having" MD, Millicent

"My personal experience and the personal affects on my mental health often come during summer. I am too afraid to leave my house on high fire days in case I am Not contactable. I feel isolated and cut off from the community. It plays on my mind each year I am as prepared as I can be around my property - the only Thing I can not address is the lack of phone service." Peter and Sue Wooding, Maaoupe

"I find it difficult to meet/maintain social friendships due to lack of communication. Very depressing and isolating" Amanda, Millicent

"Yes my wife suffers from mental health issues and it very concerning for me not to be able to speak to her when she needs me if she's having a rough day There's been days when I have not gone to work just because I can't be in contact My son also does some online tutoring after school, two days a week to help develop his grades and at the moment we have to make sure his computer is the only device connected to the wifi to be able to achieve this otherwise we would have to travel into town for his lessons Living with two teenagers with limited internet is very stressful for parents 🤔" Ben Henry, Maaoupe

"I live alone and struggle to keep up With social contact during Covid times due to lack of phone coverage" Anonymous, Southend

"As a mental health sufferer I have support people I can call or message if I need them. Without service I can't contact those people or even services to help. Not everyone had a local support base and the need to call those far away is important" KR, Millicent

Opportunities for improving Telecommunications in the Wattle Range Region

The current models for funding telecommunication improvements in regional areas is not working in the Wattle Range region because *"networks and technologies are largely being deployed on a commercial basis by the telecommunications industry"* (Regional Telecommunications Review 2021 Issues Paper). The sparse population of the Wattle Range region ensures that mobile phone towers and NBN fibre expansions are not commercially viable.

Yet, our region is one of the most productive regions in Australia and will quite possibly be a future food bowl for the Nation. But this value is not measured when it comes to mobile phone tower decisions.

The only way that Government can support the rapid rollout of telecommunication solutions in our region (and regional Australia) is to completely overhaul the way that funding for regional towers and NBN fibre expansion is allocated. Telecommunication improvements should be prioritised giving consideration to:

- The need: Actual ground area of black spots and dropout areas
- The gaps: The gap between existing coverage/service and the service/coverage that mainstream Australia receives
- The risk: Bushfires, suicide rates, road accidents
- The value: The main industries that will benefit and this holistic value (not just economical)

Until we move away from a market-based approach to telecommunications, the issues in regional Australia will continue.

In addition to this, new technologies, such as Low Earth Orbit Satellites should be rolled out in regional areas first. It is regional areas that have been disadvantaged with the current system and these areas should be given the opportunity to catch up in technologies, rather than be subjected to a wider technological gap.

Awareness of Telecommunication Services in the Wattle Range region

“My 79 year old mother lives at this address alone. It is bizarre the NBN goes through her property but she battles with mobile and internet service. It is a constant worry about her safety” Anne-Marie Williams, Coonawarra

The majority of information available about connectivity options, including predictive coverage data and speeds is sourced online. This is problematic for people living in regional Australia who have connectivity issues and can't always effectively access the internet.

In addition to this, many customers in regional areas are loyal to their long-term providers, even if these providers may not be the most optimal for services in their area. If telecommunication providers are not legally required to inform their customers that they can get a better deal from one of their competitors, they aren't going to willingly provide this information.

Additionally, with constant dropouts, customers in the Wattle Range area will simply use their mobile phones a lot less. Users who use their phone just out of necessity are less likely to be competent in all the functions available on modern mobile phones and therefore be unaware of potential service enhancing features such as WIFI calling.

Telecommunication Providers have an ethical obligation to ensure that regional customers are getting the best value from their phone and internet plans, acknowledging that these plans are inferior simply due to where the customer is located. Telecommunications Providers also need to acknowledge that the best way of communicating with their customers in regional areas may not be through the means of communication that they are selling to their customers. Face to face communication, demonstrations and written communications may be required to get effective messaging through to regional Australians.

Appendix

Export of Survey Results: Phone Reception in Wattle Range (see attached)

For Further Information

Please contact:

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Director Development Services
Wattle Range Council
efc@wattlerange.sa.gov.au
Mobile: 0400884530

(If phoning, please advise ahead of time so I can situate myself in my loungeroom on the outskirts of Millicent and you can receive the full experience of a mobile phone conversation in the Wattle Range region)