



TASMANIAN HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

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To: Standing Committee on Communications and The Arts

The Tasmanian Hospitality Association is the peak industry body for hotels, restaurants, cafes, pubs, RSLs, community and sporting clubs in Tasmania.

The THA welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to your enquiry regarding single and multi-carrier internet and mobile phone infrastructure.

While the current internet and mobile phone services in Tasmania have provided a mostly reliable service for hospitality businesses in our major population centres, the same cannot be said of the services currently provided to Tasmania's rural and regional areas.

While we recognise there has been a substantial level of investment towards addressing Tasmania's internet and mobile phone blackspots, hospitality businesses in many of Tasmania's rural and regional areas continue to be faced with poor or intermittent services.

The impact that this has on these rural and regional businesses is substantial, too often resulting in a loss of bookings and future business.

It is also important to note that modern tourists and visitors not only rely on their phones and internet devices to navigate their way to their destinations they also rely on these devices to learn about the places to stay, eat and visit on their arrival. The current poor-quality service in these areas therefore not only has a direct impact on local businesses, it also provides for a sub-standard service and experience for the visitor. Even something as simple as accessing the internet to read the news from their home state or country, can become a frustrating experience for many of our visitors.

Notwithstanding the investment that has been made to date, while better services are being provided in areas such as the Cradle Valley, the service is still impacted by congestion. And in areas such as Strahan and the Freycinet Peninsula, the removal of the old copper network in these areas will place greater demands on the current wireless services. These areas are needing to move to cloud-based systems to keep up with technology, with poor service, venues are noticing considerable issues especially during peak times. Effective online meetings are impacted due to poor connection, thus causing productivity issues. Venues in these areas have also been forced to purchase satellite phones for their properties as a duty of care to staff and guests for times of total network loss. So an important consideration for the future is not whether the service is being provided, but whether the service is meeting the local needs.

"Dedicated to Maintaining and Improving the Professionalism and Prosperity of the Tasmanian Hospitality Industry"

Important most of all, the poor quality of internet and mobile phone services in these areas is an issue of safety for our visitors and our rural communities. This is particularly of concern in terms of emergency situations, including in our more isolated areas which are home to some of Tasmania's iconic destinations, and our major road journeys. These road journeys are on our rural and regional roads, with many visitors traveling to their destinations in the evenings. Above all else, we believe quality internet and mobile phone services must be regarded as essential for the safety of our visitors as they travel around Tasmania, and our local communities.

It is in this context that the THA strongly advocates for improved internet and mobile services in our rural and regional areas, and to ensure this is delivered as a matter of urgency. It is also in this context that the THA advocates for multi-service provider infrastructure, if this results in a more cost-effective approach that can deliver the much-needed outcomes, in a much, much shorter timeframe.

And if the carriers, together with the Australian and Tasmanian governments, can work cooperatively in prioritising this infrastructure (as opposed to working independently and in competition), then this will result in a better quality and safer experience, as our visitors travel around our island state.



Steve Old
CEO, Tasmanian Hospitality Association