

3 pages .

Senate Inquiry into the sale of telstra – Dubbo, 14.4.05

Party lines became a thing of the past for us here at Trilby Station in 1988, when we were connected to the DRCS phone system. This was a huge step forward, making clear communication a reality. The service was reliable and the voice quality excellent. It is totally beyond comprehension that today, 17 years later, and with all the technological advances that have taken place during those years – we have been given a phone service that is far inferior to our old one.

The new CDMA WLL phones (installed at Trilby early March 04) has been a constant source of irritation with the following problems experienced :

- Poor voice quality – people say I sound like I'm 'talking under water' or 'tinny'.
 - An echo
 - The voices cut in and out
 - Phone not ringing on incoming calls
 - Busy tone when the phone is actually free
 - A loud 'beep/alarm' at irregular intervals
 - Call drop outs
 - Failure to connect
 - A 5 digit number has to prefix all fax calls
 - Faxes transmitted and received not always arriving at their destination
 - Much slower fax transmission speed
 - Telephone will go into 'fax mode' if you are speaking on it while sending a fax (from a different line) nearby. The telephone call then cuts out and the line goes dead.
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- **Eftpos will not work on CDMA WLL**
 - **Medic Alert necklaces will not work on CDMA WLL**
 - **Faxes requiring a voice activated pin (such as flight plans to Air services Australia) won't work on CDMA WLL**
 - **Fax machines set at greater than 4800 bps cannot successfully fax a CDMA WLL customer (N.B fax machines come pre-set at 9600bps)**

Trilby Station- a large pastoral business as well as successful Farmstay

Telstra/NDC technicians have worked tirelessly to overcome these faults and have managed to eliminate the echo... but all other problems mentioned above still occur randomly. A USO satellite has been installed at my home to allow me to use EFTPOS. My fax has also been connected to this service for greater reliability. A small mobile repeater cell has also been installed at my homestead to allow me to divert my business phone to my mobile when I'm working in my accommodation places (on the old DRCS my cordless phone would work in these places)

- **Period 23.4.04 – 25.6.04 – 18.9% failure on incoming calls to our number**

- During the period Nov 04 to Jan 05 - 18% of incoming calls to our number failed (didn't even ring in the office) ... a tourist will not drive to an outback destination, hoping you'll be home and have a vacancy...if they can't get you on the phone they will go elsewhere.
- On 15th and 16th Nov 04 my business number was out of order so Telstra diverted calls to my mobile.... 45.45% failed to connect (10 out of 22 calls)
- Up until this week I have been unable to fax multiple page documents to any customer on CDMA WLL (needed a software update in my USO satellite)
- On 18.6.04 18 incoming calls in a row failed to our number
- All customers (approx 54 properties/families) on the Landsdown repeater tower out of Louth have had no phone access (including mobile) on numerous occasions since CDMA WLL installed in the area. This varies from a few minutes (constantly) to up to 24 hours on 1.12.04. This could have huge ramifications in the event of a serious accident/medical problem.

Telstra released its update on 'Response to the regional Telecommunications Inquiry' - (Estens Inquiry) - on 3.3.05

Page 8 of this report... Completing the RATE (remote Australia Telecommunications enhancement) programme (R2.8) This was the conversion of the older ARCs and DRCS systems to the new technology. This report details "No other activities are outstanding under this recommendation" In other words, no other work (other than the denied access sites) is to be done for those cut over from DRCS and ARCS to CDMA WLL. What about all the inherent problems mentioned above associated with the poor performance on CDMA WLL... are we stuck with them forever?

Telstra's mission statement reads "To develop, design and deliver great communications solutions to every customer". How did we wander so far from this objective and how can Telstra reconcile the fax problems, the call drop-outs, the poor voice quality and the internet/data speeds etc with this mission statement?

The ATUG (Australian Telecommunications Users Group) policy states: "Users of communications services in regional Australia should have access to the same range of services, at the same prices and same levels of service as metropolitan users."

Telecommunication users in the bush are entitled to have equal access to reliable, equitable services comparable to those of metropolitan users.

Issues for end users;

- Customers in Standard Zones whose services are provided by radio were unable to access Big Pond 2 way sat offer made to Extended Zone customers.

- Those Standard Zone customers who have been cutover to CDMA WLL are doubly disadvantaged as the technology will only provide 14.4 kbps at optimum performance. Customer experience is more likely to be 10 kbps.
- Despite repeated assurances from Telstra that issues will be addressed, CDMA WLL continues to fail to meet customer expectations. This applies particularly to voice quality, call failures and fax performance and certainly is not the upgrade customers were promised.
- Customers operating rural businesses believe that the performance of their CDMA WLL telephone service has the ability to adversely affect the viability of their business.
- Poor voice quality and slow data speeds provided by CDMA WLL restricts equal access to on-line education.

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