



Mt Wilga, Port Wine Road
Alpha QLD 4724

22/05/2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are writing to express our concerns regarding the proposed amendments to the Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation (Standard Telephone Service – Requirements and Circumstances) Determination.

We live on Mt Wilga station approximately 90 kilometres from the nearest town of Alpha (population 300). Our household and business currently relies on a HCRC/RRADIO landline service and nbn satellite internet. Power at our property is via an unreliable SWER line and we experience frequent outages. We have sporadic, occasional bars of mobile coverage that we can access via a cel-fi and high gain antenna.

For people in our situation, telecommunications are not optional. They are essential for safety, emergency response, business, health, family contact and staying connected.

We are particularly concerned about the proposed Determination changes that would mean we need to migrate to a satellite voice service that requires power to operate. Our current landline is self-powered and is the only available communications service during regular power outages in our district.

In rural and remote Australia, reliable power cannot be assumed. Power outages, storms, generator issues and limited access to technical support are common realities. Installing or upgrading batteries, generators, solar systems or backup power can cost thousands of dollars and is not achievable for households like ours.

Under the proposed changes, we are worried consumers could lose access to essential voice services simply because they cannot afford, maintain or manage the power requirements of newer technologies. This represents a major shift from the traditional Universal Service Obligation, where services such as copper and CAN Radio/HCRC continued to operate during outages because they were powered through the network.

We are deeply concerned that rural and remote consumers like ourselves are being expected to absorb the cost, complexity and risk of telecommunications technology transitions without equivalent safeguards or protections being put in place.

We are also concerned that these changes raise significant equity and human rights concerns for rural, remote and vulnerable Australians, particularly where access to essential communications and emergency services may depend on a consumer's ability to fund and maintain additional equipment.

The impacts these changes may have on our employee safety and workplace obligations is significant. On properties like ours, reliable communications are critical for worker welfare, emergency response, vehicle movements and day-to-day station operations. During storms, outages or emergencies, communications can be the difference between a minor incident and a life-threatening situation.

If both voice and internet services become reliant on the same power-dependent satellite technology, without adequate redundancy, this creates additional risks for isolated workers, contractors and families living and working in remote areas.

In our circumstances, the loss of reliable communications would mean an inability to contact Triple Zero during a power outage. During storm season we would have no redundancy, as both the proposed satellite voice service and our nbn satellite broadband would not only require power to operate, but

would be affected by heavy rain. Having no communications would leave our family vulnerable and at risk in an emergency.

We respectfully ask that the Government reconsider these amendments and undertake further consultation with affected rural, remote and vulnerable consumers before progressing these changes.

Telstra should be required to ensure consumers can access affordable backup power supply equipment and there should be management plans and consumer protections in place for vulnerable cohorts. We strongly disagree with the amendments allowing refusal of a voice service based on a consumers' ability to source and adequate power supply.

The Universal Service Obligation (USO) exists to ensure all Australians can access essential telephone services regardless of where they live. These changes risk undermining that principle for the very people the USO was designed to protect.

Yours sincerely,

Angie & Brant Bettridge
Mt Wilga
Alpha QLD 4724