

# W Tree Promotion & PROGRESS ASSOCIATION INC.

Keeping our community connected

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To whom it may concern, Regional Telecommunications Review Board.

I make this submission as President of the W Tree Promotion and Progress Association of which most W Tree residents are members. W Tree is a community of about 70 permanent residents. As such it is the largest community on Gelantipy Rd north of Buchan by far. Additionally, SIBA Buddhist Retreat Centre is in the heart of W Tree and regularly hosts events with attendances of up to 100 guests. There are several Bed and Breakfast establishments and some holiday homes. It is entirely possible for W Tree to be housing up to 200 people at times of the year. On top of this, Gelantipy Road is used by many tourists travelling through to Jindayne and McKillops Bridge.

And yet, for telecommunications, W Tree is the most poorly served area on Gelantipy Rd between Red Knob and Gelantipy. With mobile phone coverage that varies from non existent to, at best, unreliable (and even ABC radio reception that is patchy), we feel ignored in our situation. This has been exacerbated by the installation of a mobile tower at Butchers Ridge (and apparently another soon at Gelantipy) without any community consultation that I am aware of. Neither of these have or are likely to make any significant improvement to connectivity for W Tree users.

There is only one road in and out of this whole area, so connectivity in times of danger is very important. Government agencies send fire, weather and evacuation warnings on mobile phones and these fail to get to many of us. Also, as mentioned earlier, ABC radio reception is poor so for many W Tree residents there may be no local coverage of events at all.

In my opinion much money has been wasted in the Mobile Black Spot programmes so far due to this apparent lack of consultation: both of topographical maps and of the people who live in these areas. Surely the aim is to achieve the best result for the money spent in terms of connecting the most possible users? Such siting decisions can not be properly made at a desk in Melbourne!

Taking all the above into consideration I submit the following points for consideration:-

1. That the installation authorities take into account the actual number of people likely to benefit when choosing locations for new mobile phone towers. This should include consultation with local communities likely to benefit or not benefit from a proposed installation.
2. In parts of the W Tree community there is minimal phone reception from from existing towers so that mobile operation is possible with a large antenna attached to the phone. I submit that in such situations the government may save a large amount of money by providing in home mobile repeaters to residents in this situation free of charge . Hundreds of these repeaters could be provided for the cost of one tower even at the high retail price currently charged by Telstra. Obviously the government would pay much less.
3. I understand that mobile phone towers are installed with 8 hours battery backup. In remote fire prone areas I submit that this is completely inadequate. Power is often the first service to go off during a fire and in those circumstances crews will not be safely able to take generators to the tower sites. I submit that automatic power backup of at least 24 hours should be provided for towers in remote areas where residents and visitors may be completely dependent on them for communications during hazardous events.

Ian Delaney,

for and on behalf of the WTPPA, 5/8/2018

