



Record of oral submission to the ACCC

Matter name:	Telstra/TPG proposed spectrum sharing		
ACCC parties:	Merger Investigations: Eado Varon, Caylie McDonald Competition Exemptions: Soo Sian Koh		
Other parties:	Alliance of Western Councils <ul style="list-style-type: none">Craig Davies (Mayor of Narromine Shire and Chair of AWC)		
File Number:	MA1000021		
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Phone to <input type="checkbox"/>	Phone from <input type="checkbox"/>	Meeting <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The ACCC met with Alliance of Western Councils (**AWC**) to discuss its written submission in relation to the Telstra/TPG merger authorisation application. The following issues were discussed.

Broad concerns about connectivity

1. The largest problem that AWC members face is not a lack of competition, but a complete lack of connectivity. Telstra is the only provider of telecommunications that works reliably in certain AWC members' areas. Optus is available in rare spots. There is a lack of a coordinated master plan in the areas. The AWC acknowledges it is expensive to have coverage everywhere, but the consequence is a serious safety hazard.
2. Lack of connectivity also makes the AWC member region a less favourable destination and more difficult to attract new staff. There are potential developers who want to come to the shires and establish multi-million-dollar businesses. Not having high speed, reliable internet hinders these potential opportunities.

Comments about proposed Telstra-TPG authorisation

3. The AWC's submissions supported the proposed Telstra-TPG authorisation because it has the potential to improve the connectivity and ability of local people to utilise telecommunications. The AWC is not sure of the extent to which the proposed transaction will specifically improve connectivity in AWC member areas.
4. For example, the proposed transaction likely won't change much in the Narromine and Trangie areas as they are where you commonly lose reception. Connectivity won't significantly improve unless there is more infrastructure that is committed to be built in this area. Over the next 12-18 months, the area will likely get some upgrades.

Field Solutions Group was previously engaged to build more towers across the shire and that agreement was possibly signed in April 2021.

5. The majority of AWC members choose Telstra as Telstra owns 90% of the towers in the region. Although most residents prefer Telstra, if an alternative provided better connectivity, residents would likely switch.
6. If the transaction was not to go ahead, the AWC would likely approach the Minister to bring about a coordinated approach to provide an acceptable level of telecommunications service to those areas. With the increase in agricultural production expected over the next few years, connectivity is vital. With reliable connectivity you can manage pumps, valves, GPSs etc. from a phone.