

Submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission for Merger
authorisation :

TELSTRA CORPORATION LIMITED AND TPG TELECOM LIMITED arrangement for the sharing
of active infrastructure and spectrum in regional Australia

As the retiring lead on the Ovens Murray Regional Partnership - Digital Futures Coordination group, I would welcome any advances in providing a broader range of services in regional areas. Our Digital Futures group is focussed on improving the digital capacity of the region through inclusion, access, connectivity and affordability.

The Ovens Murray Region has a poor rating history of digital inclusion and the if this merger can provide further competition of “like” services and enable more affordable access to digital services in regional areas then this would be a significant boost to the social and economic position of the region.

Telecommunication users in the area are limited in the range of services provided from non-Telstra mobile operators due to difficulties of broadening infrastructure to remote and isolated communities. Providing greater access to the telecommunications infrastructure and a competitive retail offer will not only provide more efficiency in the system but potentially more access to other digital services.

NBN broadband and Star Link services are already providing competition in the fixed broadband service and with further 5G and 4G data opportunities available then the range of data providers can only assist those that are most at risk of **digital exclusion**, the socially disadvantaged and elderly members.

More choice and coverage mean more opportunities and potential for users to access coverage during critical periods such as COVID lockdowns and other impediments such as bushfire and floods.

Personally, as a TPG NBN digital user and a Telstra mobile customer I can already testify to the benefits of competition across multiple providers. Rather than in the past when a single provider was the only possible alternative.

[Redacted signature]

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