Apologies for the lateness of this feedback in response to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission’s inquiry into whether mobile roaming should be required by regulation.

The Central Highlands Regional Council has the following items that it believes would need to be addressed regarding mandated roaming. If these issues could not be addressed then Council would be right in carrying concern moving forward.

If Telstra as a business lost its regional advantage and pulled back from its development spend we would need to understand how we would facilitate infrastructure build and continue to improve mobile coverage in regional areas. This comes at a time when there is a strong growth in infrastructure and it would be important to ensure that this continues. Would Local, State and Federal government become involved in the building and maintenance of these assets to enable telecommunication providers such as Optus, Vodafone and Telstra (who would become a service carrier) to provide these services?

It should be noted that the more regional the infrastructure the greater the chance that the asset would be running at a loss so what business model would continue to facilitate this as Telstra currently does with some of their regional network.

This would also need to be further underpinned by understanding other telecommunication providers plans for regional infrastructure build or more specifically if they have any plans?

While the ability to roam would be advantageous to users in more urban areas who travel through regional locations, those that live regionally “generally” understand the challenges that are faced and as a result utilise the carrier that provides the best service (e.g. Telstra) albeit at a generally higher cost.  While the changes would provide a wider range of telecommunication providers and as a result we should see a fall in consumer costs it would need to be weighed against the continued development of regional infrastructure.

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