I recently came across this inquiry, and when I initially started filling in the form, my browser crashed before I got back to it, and then I left this email in the drafts.

I am a member of WICEN NSW Inc, but am making this submission on my own behalf.  I have also worked in the industry in the past, and now live in a small rural town, Oberon NSW.

Personally, I use Telstra 3G and 4G for voice and some data.  Some years ago I tried a Vodafone modem, and that was a total waste of money, as despite the maps, they did not support data; even parked in relative proximity to the tower.

I have also travelled round Australia, and internationally in the past.

While in Norway, visiting family I obtained a SIM from Chess, a virtual provider, and noticed that in some areas I connected to their preferred NetCom (now Telia) cells, and in others I connected to Telenor (the former monopoly) cells.   There was no charge to roam.  This is how a network should run, especially in a country with many remote villages, strung out along its long coast,  and with deep fjords and mountainous roads.

As a member of WICEN, a volunteer communications support group, we periodically provide radio communications support to a wide range of search agencies.  At one search our base on the ridge in the Kanangra Falls area had Telstra service from Picton, a significant distance away, which worked acceptably using a hand-held 'phone, and well using a mast-mounted antenna and hot-spot device which also provided sockets for office-style phones.  The problem was, that while we had reliable telephone service, the other volunteers using Optus or Vodafone could not be contacted, even if they were somewhere in the base area.  In one case, this caused some inconvenience,

Likewise, in places such as Jenolan Caves (located in a deep velley), there is a single Telstra microcell, so only Telstra users can use their 'phones, along with tourists with home-country services which have roaming including Telstra.  Actually, it must appear odd that their home country 'phone works but not their Vodafone SIM.  It has also been said that tourists whose home country providers have roaming contracts with multiple Australian companies get better service than Australians!

The other benefit of roaming is that a business such as a department store or shopping centre with a basement area or basement car-park can provide coverage by contacting a single provider, rather than three.  The same applies to public transport providers, whether for tunnels, or below-ground concourse areas.

Thanks,

Julian Sortland.

[REDACTED]