To Whom It May Concern,

In regard to the ACCC enquiry being conducted into the impacts of Regulated Mobile Roaming in the Australian market, I would like to submit the opinion of the Board of Management for the **Man From Snowy River Bush Festival;** a 4 day event that takes place in Corryong, Victoria in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains at the end of March each year. This unique Festival reflects the history and lifestyle of people of the Australian Bush.  The authentic “Aussie Bush” nature of our Festival, the spectacular scenery, the variety and high calibre of competition and entertainment appear to be the underlying attraction that brings over 20,000 country and city wanderers to our Festival over 4 days each year.  It is a heritage we are very proud of and believe is worthy of promoting to the rest of the world.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT, VOLUNTEERS & SPONSORS:**

The Festival is a not for profit incorporated organisation managed by a community based (volunteer) Board of Management. Three elements that are the lifeblood to a Festival’s success is a supportive Community, the Volunteers, Competitors and our Sponsors. It would be very difficult for our Festival to take place if any of these components didn’t exist. The Festival is supported by a large number of local Community Clubs and groups which the Festival in turn pays to undertake a number of essential tasks. Over **$100,000** is paid out to Community groups each year from the Festival. In addition the Festival directly invests approx. $50,000 into various infrastructure improvements annually at the local Recreation Reserve which benefit around 20 different user groups including the Festival. In general the trusty crew of Festival Volunteers (approx. 300 +) are invaluable. To run an event such as this is a huge draw on the regions volunteers but the return to the Community and the region makes it worth the hard work everyone puts in (economic value to the region  as valued by Towong Shire - $7.5 million).

As much as *competition* in theory sounds like a good idea, the reality is that the smaller phone providers will not be looking to remote areas to invest their money in infrastructure the returns they would receive would not make it worth their while.

Telstra has in the past (and continues to) implement strong and reliable communication structures in areas that would not be financially viable as standalone projects.  However, in doing so have built an awareness in the market place of being not only the biggest, but definitely the most likely, and most reliable in providing communication in remote areas across Australia. Aussies in regional areas depend on this service.  To allow smaller entities to fly in on the back of the (existing) Telstra infrastructure

and harvest the cream off the top is;
(a) not fair
(b) will severely decrease the relevant returns to Telstra

(c) I would imagine decrease the incentive for Telstra to continue investing in regional areas.

Our understanding of the impact on remote areas and events (such as ours) of Regulated Mobile Roaming, is that it would effectively deter companies (eg Telstra) from investing in remote regions such as Corryong and surrounds as the returns to them would be seriously affected.

We know for a fact that due to the growth in attendance of visitors to our Festival that our existing phone services do not cope at all. In fact in 2014 the volume of traffic over the Festival week crashed the system so bad that even the Police and Ambulance could not get through to 000 on their phones. The whole town, as well as the attendees at the Festival was severely affected as the mobile and internet traffic literally came to a standstill.

Due to the growth of visitors to the region because of the Festival’s popularity, 2014 proved to all local emergency services and thousands of visitors and locals alike that **it is critical for the health and safety, social wellbeing and goodwill of the Community for there to be a reliable and capable communication system in place always, but even more so when the local population is increased more than 10-fold.**

Since the 2014 Festival, and due to the communication issues that arose during that year, Telstra now provides a “COW” (Cell On Wheels/communication tower) which increases and enables communications over the Festival week to run smoothly. We are fortunate that Telstra have been able to provide this to the region as part of a sponsorship contra with the Festival and at no cost to the community. I believe the cost is over $50,000 which is something that the Festival would never be able to afford.

Telstra already have a vested interest in the country and remote areas of Australia; Telstra understand and have a financial commitment which continues to drive them to maintain and improve facilities; if you sell off the income to all comers, they won’t continue with that commitment with a return.

The most important factor in choosing a mobile service is that they can provide and maintain service.  Telstra can do this better than Optus and Vodaphone because they are already here and have a long-term commitment in regional areas via the infrastructure that they already have put in place.

We don’t need a range of mobile services eg (I don’t need a new phone every year…..just one that works!) The cost is, what it is.  To provide a reliable service LONG TERM with a guarantee of better service, and ongoing long term improvements, with no black spots is more important than being the cheapest.  A cheap phone that has no coverage is no help in an emergency.

Country folk know we pay more for everything, but it is our choice to live in the areas we do, because we love it. However, we also deserve to have access to internet, mobile phone and the latest technology that reduces our isolation and supports **health and safety, social wellbeing and goodwill in every corner of Australia regardless**.  Corryong and parts of the surrounding Upper Murray region do have 4G improvement, however these are gradual and we need that to continue.

We are very concerned for all the above reasons regarding the introduction of Regulated Mobile Roaming that it will backfire on communities such as ours.  From our perspective, Telstra is servicing this area well and when we had a big problem they listened, responded, provided the solution and are working on resolving the issues as a permanent fix.

Kind Regards,

***Jennifer Boardman***

Coordinator

**Man From Snowy River Bush Festival**

info@bushfestival.com.au

[**http://www.bushfestival.com.au**](http://www.bushfestival.com.au/)

Phone: (02) 6076 1992



For the latest Festival updates please go to our website:  [www.bushfestival.com.au](http://www.bushfestival.com.au)

Or visit our Facebook page