The Australian Competition & Consumer Commission

Level 35, The Tower

360 Elizabeth Street

Melbourne Central, Melbourne Vic3000

Friday, 2 December 2016

**Submission re: Domestic Roaming**

As members of a rural fire service based in Merrijig, regional Victoria, we wish to raise our concerns into the ACCC inquiry on mobile roaming.

Our Rural Fire Brigade is located approximately 15km’s East of Mansfield in the North-East Fire Region. We are situated at the base of Mt Buller. In particular, during the summer period the surrounding area is a combination of volatile grassy plains and forested hills. We are constantly on high alert for bush fires during this period.

Our members and volunteers rely heavily on their mobile communications and data technology, the main purpose being to access mapping, weather reports, fire updates and maintain communications between our groups. As technology has advanced the ability to fight a fire situation with more readily available data at our finger tips, helps save time and lives.

The current ACCC inquiry is a concern to our members. It appears to be creating more costs and making it more complex for telecommunications carriers to focus on investing in regional and rural areas. The focus will be on the metropolitan areas where there is more competition and consumers.

Ongoing investment in regional and rural mobile coverage is paramount for both community organisations like ours that rely heavily on this coverage for safety and security.

Mobile roaming will discourage ongoing investment in the less populated areas. Reduced investment will impact on local mobile network coverage and capacity. This will potentially impede the ongoing improvements to coverage and data speeds that is paramount for our member’s to operate effectively.

Regards

*P Bowker*

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