

M.R.H. Pullin

Kaukapakapa
Auckland 0873

11/7/2020

Attn: Ben Oakley, Commerce Commission, PO Box 2351, Wellington.

Dear Ben,

I listened with great interest to your comments made during an interview on radio NZ last Friday morning.

Some of the things you said regarding the future of landlines and the copper network were to say the least alarming and hence my reason for writing and giving comments as you requested.

I have to say after your discussing some of the problems associated with internet connectivity, high speed broadband etc, to only give a web site address for further contact was lacking a little empathy for those of us with real problems in this regard. Perhaps an 0800 tel number or even a physical address would be helpful.

Hence my having to use so called snail mail to submit my comments for your study.

To explain, my personal situation is that I live in a rural location with no internet or cell phone reception other than a very poor copper wire "dial up" service using ISP Orcon for \$15 per month. This facility is quite frankly pathetic but is all I can get at the moment but in reality, not of much practical use.

There is a local broadband signal provider Compass who have erected wooden towers to service two new sub divisions but you need line of sight to make use of these. I can see neither of them so cannot make use of this service and in any case people report problems with it anyway. For example, a tree easily blocks the signal !

There is another solution in the form of Farmside who offer a satellite service. Again, I have heard bad reports of the service and the minimum term is 2 years with a graded cost structure for data which is quite expensive when compared to mainstream providers offering unlimited data plans. Why should we be penalized in this way?

I say we because my plight is not just limited to myself. There are others in the area who have similar problems such as my partner who lives 4km away from me. She cannot receive a signal via Compass because a tree is blocking her line of sight so she has to stand on her bed and lean out the window to send and receive texts.

For me to work on line using my laptop I have to drive (usually on a weekly basis) a nearly 50k (round trip) to Orewa and use my daughters wi-fi. That is no problem but is not exactly convenient as I cannot sit in the comfort of my own home and browse the net or check e-mails whenever I fancy.

On the question of landlines I call mine my "lifeline" for a very good reason. Without it I would be cut off in the event of an emergency etc. During Covid lockdown I was in a bubble of one for 41 days with only the landline keeping me in touch with the outside

world as obviously I didn't have internet or cellphone reception. Note in this regard I am in a high-risk age group so stayed home as much as possible.

Furthermore, with copper based landlines they will continue working in the event of a power cut. We suffer greatly with power outages (no thanks to Vector) and it is reassuring that at least the phone will work when these things often happen.

I accept that the mainstream broadband service providers will provide landline signals but should the power go down this will not function so you are truly cut off. Therefore, as a consequence, for example in the case of Compass you will need two plans with two sets of costs to be safe – one for the internet signal (Compass) and another with (in my case) Vodafone to ensure the landline will work.

Finally, when I bought my laptop it was set up for Windows 10 which at first sight is fine. However, I quickly found that Windows 10 did not support a dial up function. So, for around \$400 I had Windows 10 removed and replaced by Windows 7 as I was told that this software was the most recent that would give me a dial up facility which it has so far been doing.

But now, as you are probably aware Microsoft withdrew support for Windows 7 earlier this year so that leaves me well and truly between a rock and a hard case...or up a creek without a paddle etc. I can't win.

I am not sure where I go from here. Simple solution is to move house but then why should I. When I moved her 10 years ago the whole thing wasn't an issue. It is really annoying and frustrating when everything these days wants you to go on-line or visit a web site when you can't.

There are increasingly small surcharges being levied for financial transactions not done on-line such as vehicle licensing. They all mount up and it seems unfair to me.

There is talk of a rural broadband initiative but what's happened to that? I would like to see perhaps a government sponsored satellite setup or even get Chorus to bring their cable down our road so we can join the real world...pigs might fly. Something has to be done to fill in the gaps such as mine (and many others) regarding internet connectivity otherwise what are we to do...the problem cannot and should not be ignored as people like me are being left behind big time by supposed progress.

To my mind, before everyone rushes into the future with all this new technology it should on the proviso that all locations, homes whatever have a minimum level of connectivity to the internet and acceptable cellphone reception. Let us not be too hasty to dismiss so called "old school" technology before the new stuff will satisfy everybody's both current and future needs.

I am sorry to have gone on a bit but for me it is a real problem and judging by your radio comments the clock is beginning to tick faster and faster. Comments about phasing out copper services by 2022 or landlines for example are scary.

Please let me know if I can assist further and note my landline number is [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]...please don't e-mail or txt me!!

Yours sincerely,


M.R.H. Pullin (Mike)