

Time submitted: 29/04/2020 11:06:24 AM

**Submission Number: NND.001.01336****Submission Of:** [REDACTED]**Your Details**

Email address: [REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED]

Preferred means of contact:

What is your submission based on? I am making this submission based on my professional knowledge, qualifications or experience or on behalf of a group or organisation

What is your area of professional expertise?

If you are lodging your submission on behalf of a group or organisation, what is the name of the group or organisation? Krambach Community (Hillville Fire)

**Your Submission**

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response worked well?

The RFS were amazing as were the traffic control police, local residents & rural landholders in what were catastrophic conditions on the Mid Coast of NSW in November 2019

In your experience, what areas of the bushfire emergency response didn't work well?

Complete telecommunications failure put our community at risk over several days. Telstra did not act appropriately, timely nor efficiently in addressing their mobile network failure. Mains power to the Nabiac tower was cut but there was no damage to the tower. It simply required a replacement battery & generator fuel to be fully functional.

Telstra did not have an EMERGENCY TELECOMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY in place. There was much confusion regarding the responsibilities of Telstra, State & Federal departments. For several days, Telstra communicated that 'their hands were tied' as the fire continued on two fronts. The Krambach community had full view of the Nabiac tower which was clearly undamaged & now covered in fire retardant. It simply required more fuel in the generator. The ADF should have been engaged earlier to restore power to the tower to community could receive emergency information.

Telstra relies on a call centre in the Philippines to address emergency calls from the public. This call centre does not have authority to transfer calls to an Australian representative & can only offer 'additional data' to assist those in an emergency situation.

In your experience, what needs to change to improve arrangements for preparation, mitigation, response and recovery coordination for national natural disaster arrangements in Australia?

Telstra, as our local essential service provider for fixed landline, mobile phone & internet services did not have an emergency strategy in place when the Nabiac phone tower lost mains power due to the Hillville bushfire. Telstra network outage information was inaccurate & misleading. When I tried to address the situation, I was asked to be patient while Telstra waits to hear back from the SES regarding the access track to the tower. Note: The RFS, not the SES was responsible for this & was ready to go.

Our community was ablaze on 2 fronts & in a state of panic. The fires near me app was locking due to inadequate mobile coverage & only those with fixed landlines had telephone communication. Krambach residents formed a low tech 24/7 community communication network to view, verify & report local fire activity to each other, in person. This was in addition to preparing our own properties, evacuating animals, fighting fires with neighbors & supporting our RFS with iceblocks, medical supplies etc

[REDACTED] from Telstra was not aware Nabiac mobile tower had failed during an interview on ABC radio. [REDACTED] 9am infrastructure update had omitted the Nabiac tower & did not include the network outages to our area. He advised number of key sites have been identified as critical to communications for the management of the fires but these sites were not currently impacted. I contacted the ABC to alert [REDACTED] of our situation but he didn't return my call. I then contacted Steve Bromhead's office who's representative advised me to "be patient, trust that telstra is doing their best. I was also told to contact David Gillespies office to inform them of the mobile network outage."

At the time, I was in between trips, evacuating my horses & then had to help fight a fire on my neighbors property, so was unable to follow up until much later. Once notified, Dr Gillespies office took my concerns very seriously & actioned a plan immediately, which saw telecommunications restored to our community.

Is there anything else you would like to tell the Royal Commission?

In light of the destruction, loss of life & livelihood, I hope that following the Royal commission into the 2019/2020 bushfires, adopts the following

- \* Essential mobile phone towers are solar powered, so they continue to operate when the power grid fails
- \* Backup battery systems for mobile phone towers are fitted with minimum 3 days capacity to provide power during low PV input conditions from cloud cover, smoke or system failure
- \* Local internet data services are automatically boosted during emergency events to ensure emergency information gets to the community
- \* Telstra Emergency call centre to be based in Australia, not the Philippines
- \* A National Emergency Telecommunications Strategy is adopted by ALL providers
- \* Engage the ADF to access telecommunication infrastructure during National disasters
- \* Improve the fires near me app reporting system to ensure incidence reports are not false. Reduce data requirement so warnings get to landholders in areas of poor network coverage

Do you agree to your submission being published? Yes I agree to my submission being published anonymously

Supporting material provided:

Fires near me.PNG

Telstra update - [REDACTED] 7am.pdf



Telstra 3G

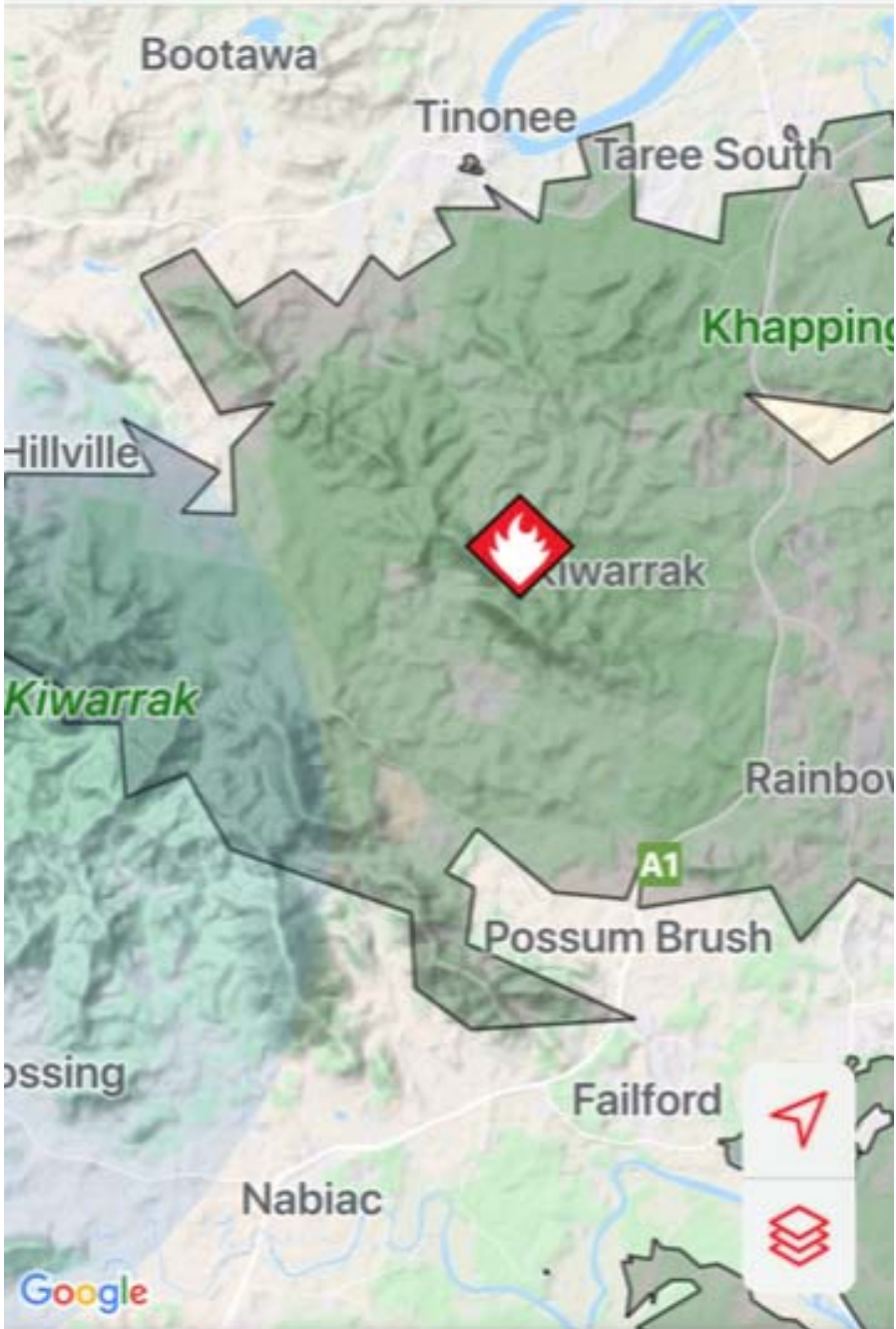
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Map

List



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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 12 November 2019 9:21 AM  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
<[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Telstra Network Updates & Disaster Assistance Package

Good morning,

Please find details of impact to Telstra services as a result of bushfires in NSW.

### Impact in NSW:

- **Fixed landline:** up to 915 fixed line telephony services predominately in Nymboida, Toorooka, Diehard & Bellbrook
- **ADSL services:** up to 119 ADSL broadband services in Koorainghat, Elands and Marlee
- **nbn services:** up to 768 Telstra NBN services predominantly in Harrington and Old Bar
- **Mobile services:** 2x3G and 3x4G mobile base stations across 3 physical sites at Scotchys, Toorooka and Bellbrook

Some fixed line telephony and ADSL recovered yesterday, however there is still approximately 33 fixed telephony services impacted due to a suspected hardware issue. Due to the restoration of 3G/4G mobile service, the community of Nymboida **is no longer isolated** and residents are able to call Triple Zero (000) (**Liberation Trail fire**)

Network and power technicians continue to attend Telstra sites, by priority, to investigate power and hardware issues, when and where safe to do so.

There is currently a loss of commercial AC Mains power to 16 network sites.

A number of key sites have been identified as critical to communications for the management of the fires. These sites are not currently impacted however work is underway in an effort to protect these sites.

### Telstra Assistance Package:

Telstra has announced an assistance package for its residential and small business customers in New South Wales who have lost services due to fire. I have attached our media release that highlights what is included in our assistance package, please feel free to circulate as necessary.

The assistance package will provide customers with access to free and interim services during the recovery period.

Areas including; Forster, Taree, Harrington, Glen Innes, Nymboida, Bellbrook, Moorooka, Hollisdale, Wherrol Flat, and Rainbow Flat are all eligible for customer assistance. We encourage customers to access more information about the package [here](#)

Please feel free to circulate the above on your socials and as you see fit. As I'm sure you can appreciate, this is a dynamic situation, so we'll be sure to keep you across any updates as they arise. In the meantime, our team is well placed to assist your office with any Telstra enquiries related to the Fire. Please don't hesitate in contacting me directly on the details below or the local team at [TelstraCentralNSW@team.telstra.com](mailto:TelstraCentralNSW@team.telstra.com)

**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, 13 November 2019 7:13 AM  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] >  
**Subject:** RE: Telstra Network Updates & Disaster Assistance Package

Good morning,

Please see below impacts to the Telstra networks as of today 13/11 due to the ongoing fire emergency in NSW.

#### Impact in NSW:

- **Fixed Landline:** Up to 1219 fixed line telephony services predominantly in Nymboida, Kilabakh, Toorooka, Taree, Marlee and Bellbrook
- **ADSL services:** Up to 118 ADSL customers located at Koorainghat, Elands and Forster are unable to connect to the internet
- **nbn services:** 768 Telstra nbn customers are experiencing a loss of voice and data services, predominantly in Harrington and Old Bar
- **Mobile services:** 2 x 3G and 5 x 4G base stations across sites including Comara, Nabiac and Bellbrook

The majority of service impact is attributed to the loss of AC Mains power at network sites. Telstra field and power technicians will attend sites when and where it is safe to do so, prioritising the restoration of mobile sites. We encourage any customers who are experiencing impacts to their services to contact Telstra on 13 22 03 and report a fault if they can do so.

#### Telstra Assistance Package:

As per my note yesterday, I wanted to remind you that Telstra has announced an assistance package for its residential and small business customers in New South Wales who have lost services due to fire. I have again attached our media release that highlights what is included in our assistance package, please feel free to circulate as necessary.

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Areas including; Forster, Taree, Harrington, Glen Innes, Nymboida, Bellbrook, Moorool Creek, Hollisdale, Wherrol Flat, and Rainbow Flat are all eligible for customer assistance. We encourage customers to access more information about the package [here](#)


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NND.001.01136 - Amendement

Question 9

I have attached a link to an example of Telstra telecommunication failure that put our community at risk.

The fires near me app was not able to update due to poor coverage so the resulting locked screens provided misinformation that prevented landholders from sourcing emergency warnings

 Please note: I feel the primary issue is Telstra coverage not RFS management