

Mr. Russell Gillon
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Palmerston, ACT.
17th November 2009

Caroline Le Couteur MLA,
ACT Legislative Assembly,
GPO Box 1020
Canberra, ACT 2601.

Dear Caroline Le Couteur,

I would like to bring to your attention for the second time the issue of poor Broadband services in Gungahlin. This letter is a follow up to the issues raised in my previous letter of the 26th September 2009, sent to you by registered mail on the 30th September 2009.

Unfortunately for the residents and businesses of Gungahlin, you have declined to respond to my previous communication. I am disappointed I did not gain your support in addressing the matters raised in that correspondence.

On the 10th of December 2008 you made your inaugural speech to the Legislative Assembly. During this speech you made the following statement:
“Being elected to the Assembly puts me in a very privileged position, and I will work hard to fulfil the trust of the people who voted for me and to serve them and the wider ACT community well.”

I respectfully request that you remain true to the statement made in Hansard concerning your representation of the residents and businesses of Gungahlin. Many people in our community will be disappointed to discover that words spoken in your inaugural speech lacked veracity.

Telecommunications in the Gungahlin area has been of a demonstrably substandard performance for many years. Gungahlin residents continue to be affected by significant broadband issues despite the opening of the Crace exchange in 2004.

People moved to Gungahlin in the mid 1990's hoping to be part of an accessible, technological community. Telstra proudly announced on a Radio National interview (aired on Thursday, 31st August 1995) that it would spend between \$20 million and \$30 million dollars on Telecommunications service for Gungahlin. That money was never spent, and subsequent promises made to Gungahlin residents appear to have met the same fate.

A congestion fault that affects a large portion of Gungahlin residents was identified over ten months ago and continues unaddressed to date. The wholesale Internet provider (Telstra Wholesale) refuses to commit to rectifying the fault, but continues to charge full fees for the service.

In an ABC Radio 666 Canberra radio interview (30th of September 2009) Chris Taylor, the General Manager of Telstra Country Wide, ACT, stated
“The [congestion] issue will be around cost. This is not a fault. It is actually a case of, there are more users than the infrastructure or transmission will allow.”

This statement in itself is admission that the Telstra deployment of Broadband in Gungahlin was flawed from its inception. It has become obvious that Telstra has not installed sufficient backhaul or (to use Chris Taylor’s word) “transmission”, to cater for the ADSL ports they planned to make available.

Telstra’s ineptitude can be demonstrated through my investigations into this issue. Using Telstra Wholesale’s own figures (published on the 11th of November, 2009 at <http://telstrawholesale.com/products/data/adsl-reports-plans.htm>) there are still 86 ports available on the ADSL enabled RIM, which I am connected through. Even with so many ports left for Telstra to sell, residents are continually affected by heavy congestion. I have published reports regarding this issue on my website that back up this assertion: <http://www.actbroadband.net>

Chris Taylor’s statement indicates that Telstra does not believe Gungahlin is worth investing in. Across the Gungahlin region Telstra have deployed 75 RIMs, one of the largest RIM deployments in the country. Each one of these RIMs is capable of servicing up to 480 phone circuits each. Assuming two phone circuits are available per house that means up to 18,000 residences and businesses are affected. Seven out of the 75 RIMs are at full capacity and have no ports available at all. Telstra Wholesale’s own documentation (11th of November, 2009) lists Cooper Pedy as the only exchange planned for additional ports.

All of these facts are compounded by the issue that there is no ADSL alternative for 18,000 Gungahlin residences. The deployment of RIMs makes it impossible to use an alternate, ADSL-based service, and wireless options are far less reliable and more expensive. Once again Telstra’s cost reduction deployments actually add to the expense experienced by the end users.

One issue of conspicuous concern is the lost opportunity for businesses to survive in Gungahlin; lack of available Government and private sector office space cannot feasibly support the local economy. In the Canberra Times article ‘ACTTAB Promise Broken: Liberals’ (15th February 2002), Gary Humphries stated:
“...it was almost impossible for ACTTAB to be moved to Gungahlin due to costs, particularly the installation of new communications lines/systems.”

As inadequate telecommunications services continue to be experienced in Gungahlin today, does the Legislative Assembly believe these issues will simply disappear? They will not. They will only get worse as businesses continue to demand access to higher levels of bandwidth. This means greater infrastructure investment and therefore higher establishment costs. Why would any businesses consider Gungahlin as an alternative location if offices at Canberra Airport already have telecommunications facilities available?

Gungahlin needs its elected officials to represent resident's concerns to key stakeholders. Our community needs you to do the following:

1. Write to Chris Taylor, Managing Director for Telstra Country Wide, ACT requesting all congestion issues be immediately addressed.
2. Write to Senator Stephen Conroy expressing the issues experienced in Gungahlin and pressing for Gungahlin to be prioritised for the NBN rollout.
3. Review the requirements around telecommunications capacity planning for new estates in the ACT to ensure the failure in Gungahlin is not repeated.

I urge you to visit my website <http://www.actbroadband.net> and look at my research. ISP's like Internode and user forums like <http://forums.whirlpool.net.au> and The RiotACT all use my work as a reference site to help people having ADSL issues.

With a growing number of disgruntled residents contacting me every day, I strongly urge you to add the weight of your support to our campaign. It is now approaching fifteen years of neglect and inaction for Gungahlin. I urge you to become involved in this issue in a meaningful way and support the citizens you were elected to represent. Gungahlin residents continue to pay premium rates for services openly acknowledged by Telstra as experiencing a congestion fault. Step up to represent the people who elected you.

Kind Regards

Russell Gillon