

DAVID HAWKER MP
Federal Member for Wannon

~~Minister for Land Transport~~



PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

9 December 1993

Mr Alan Smith
Cape Bridgewater Holiday Camp
RMB 4408
CAPE BRIDGEWATER VIC 3305

Dear Mr Smith

Thank you for your letter of 6 December 1993 enclosing the Coopers and Lybrand report and Warwick Smith's correspondence.

I appreciate being kept informed of developments and would like to congratulate you in your persistence to bring about improvements to Telecom's country services. I regret that it was at such a high personal cost.

Please find enclosed your copy of the Coopers and Lybrand report.

With best wishes for a safe and happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely


DAVID HAWKER, MP

enc
L214KH.93



Minister for Communications

The Hon. David Beddall, MP

9 DEC 1993

Senator Michael Baume
Senator for New South Wales
PO Box 473
WOLLONGONG EAST NSW 2520

Dear Senator Baume

Thank you for your representations of 5 November to Senator the Hon Bob Collins, Minister for Transport and Communications, on behalf of Mr Alan Smith, Cape Bridgewater Holiday Camp, RMB 4408, Cape Bridgewater, Victoria, concerning the standard of service he has received from Telecom Australia. Senator Collins has referred your letter to me in view of my responsibility for matters relating to telecommunications.

I wrote directly to Mr Smith on 10 November 1993 with regard to this issue.

Let me say that the Government is most concerned at allegations that Telecom has not been maintaining telecommunications service quality at appropriate levels. I accept that in a number of cases, including Mr Smith's there has been great personal and financial distress. This is of great concern to me and a full investigation of the facts is clearly warranted.

I have personally communicated these concerns to the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Telecom and asked them to take a direct interest in the resolution of the so-called "Casualties of Telecom" (COT) cases.

You may be aware that AUSTEL, the independent telecommunications regulatory authority, has a clear function of safeguarding consumer interests. It has powers under the Telecommunications Act 1991 to investigate consumer complaints about the supply of telecommunications services.

AUSTEL is currently conducting a thorough investigation to determine the exact nature and extent of the problems experienced by some Telecom customers. AUSTEL expects to finalise its report shortly.

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Telecom, for its part, has deployed a dedicated customer service review team to work with affected customers to rectify their problems. It has also commissioned independent experts to assess Telecom's technical and administrative responses to complaints of this nature, and to recommend changes to improve its complaints handling procedures.

I will be giving close attention to AUSTEL's report on the results of its investigations and proposed action to address these issues.

Yours sincerely



DAVID BEDDALL

The fast track settlement proposal, with Dr Gordon Hughes at the helm, had foundered during November and December 1993. By March 1994 TELSTRA were using their corporate strength to force the C.O.T. members into expensive and time-consuming legal processes. If TELSTRA could not get the arbitration process they had wanted since September 1993 it appeared that they would pick up their ball and go home.