

Professor Michael Woods,
Commissioner,
Productivity Commission.

Dear Prof. Woods,

I wish to comment on my own situation in relation to the current Review of Telecommunications Specific Competition Regulation.

Last week I phoned my telephone service provider, Dingo Blue, to rent a TTY for my profoundly hearing-impaired and severely visually-impaired 13 year old son. He is at the age where he wants to phone his friends and I agreed to his request. Dingo Blue did not know anything about TTY's but suggested I phone a Telstra number for Dingo Blue Customers, which I did. At first Telstra stated I should contact my service provider but then gave me another Telstra number when I explained Dingo Blue had referred me to them.

We chose to take advantage of competition within the telecommunications industry and opted for cheaper rental and calls by transferring to Dingo Blue. Following my discussion with Telstra, I am left with no choice. If I want my son to have a rental TTY, then I must change back to Telstra so the TTY charge can be added to a normal account. I could buy a TTY but then I am faced with a dilemma if it needs repair at any stage.

It seems my son faces discrimination in that he must belong to a household with Telstra as the service provider to enjoy access to a TTY. In fact, as if he doesn't have enough problems with his sensory disabilities, my son is being denied a right that most people take for granted: the ability to communicate with other people on the telephone.

I am writing to confirm there is indeed a problem in the form of a Telstra monopoly. Recently I have written to many people in the telecommunications industry seeking their support to increase the range of services provided by carriers, in particular to people with disabilities, and soliciting their support for a change in legislation, if necessary. Obviously smaller telecommunications companies will need education on additional services and then motivation to make them available to their customers. There needs to be a revision in distributing costs of services such as provision of equipment, along the lines of the National Relay Service.

Anything you can do to identify a solution so a greater range of services is available to all people (including those with disabilities) regardless of carrier would be greatly appreciated. In the meantime, my son will continue to patronise the postal service and email providers although he would much prefer the telephone since so much of the population, especially his contemporaries, has access to this device.

Yours faithfully,

Deidre Windham.