



# Telecommunications Connectivity

## Current Issues and Concerns

The City has a rapidly growing population and experiences large swells in visitor numbers in peak tourist seasons, especially over summer and Easter. Multiple concerns have been raised with the City relating to reports of loss of connectivity for both residents and businesses, and the City has additional concerns about the risks such outages create for emergency response activities.

## Residents

While multiple people appear to experience disruption and dropouts across the district, it is understood that the Vasse area in particular has been experiencing frequent internet and phone outages.

It appears that improved connectivity for residents in areas such as Vasse will still be some time away as Telstra has advised that the network cannot currently support the surge in population growth experienced over the last two years. The only available solutions at present are for the resident, at their expense, to install either a fixed landline or mobile signal boosting device in their home.

## Future Development Considerations

The City is concerned that the approach to network improvements are reactive at best and there seems to be little knowledge of planned developments within the City of Busselton such as the airport and industrial parks. Planning for residential areas also appears to rely on the developer selecting a telecommunications provider and quantifying the forecast population and timeframes for implementation. It is understood that this is often late in being communicated and contracted.

While Telstra may not be the preferred supplier, other service providers rely on Telstra's network, and therefore it is considered important that Telstra should be informed by the Western Australian Planning Commission at very early stages of structure planning new developments. However, there does not appear to be a process for this to occur.





## **Businesses and Industry**

The City has been collaborating with the Busselton Chamber of Commerce and Industry to advocate for the needs of businesses experiencing lack of connectivity, creating risks of being unable to conduct daily transactions or access online business systems necessary for their ongoing success. Ongoing lobbying is underway to ensure that local businesses and industries can continue to thrive, and that an innovative and diversified economy that supports investment and growth can be achieved.

## **Busselton Margaret River Airport (BMRA)**

The BMRA is a key strategic asset within the South West region and is surrounded by extensive commercial and industrial land in the process of being developed. Urgent connectivity upgrades are required to meet the current and future demands of this precinct, and to meet expectations of increasing numbers of passengers who rely heavily on mobile connectivity while using the airport.



## **Emergency Response**

The City wishes to ensure that any upgrades, including changes from 3G to 4G will continue to enable all emergency services to be able to operate 100% of the time across all areas of the district without any risk of drop outs or bandwidth capacity issues.



## Advocacy Activities

In February 2024, the City of Busselton wrote a series of communications to the Minister for Communications Hon Michelle Rowland MP, Federal Member for Forrest Nola Marino, Local Member for Vasse Libby Mettam, Member for the South West Jackie Jarvis MLC and Member for Blackwood Jane Kelsbie MLA about the current and future capacity within the telecommunications network across the City of Busselton's district. The City also made a submission to the Federal Government's Regional Telecommunications Review in 2024.

Key aspects which were requested were:

### Request SEMC Support for Strategic Approach

Requests the support of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) to promote a strategic, coordinated approach to telecommunications projects across Western Australia, as well as ensuring updates are provided to district and local emergency management committees.



### Request SEMC Support for Sector Engagement

Request the support of the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) to improve the engagement and participation of telecommunications providers in district and local emergency management committees across the South West.

In addition to this, the City has conducted meetings with NBNCo and Telstra to continue to advocate for the necessary services for the current and future needs of the district.

### Regional Advocacy

The City has partnered with other local governments in the South West to jointly advocate for improved services across the region. This advocacy has been channelled through the Western Australian Local Government Association.