

“Inside” Photo Comp Deadline Extended

Northcliffe's 2017 Photo Competition deadline is extended by ten days. We have some great entries but to mount our planned "Inside" exhibition we're going to need more. The competition theme is "Inside". Entries are submitted in digital image format.

Entry is free for up to five images. As well as prizes, all entrants chosen to feature in our 'Inside' exhibition will receive large format mounted prints of their images. It's truly a great deal! You can find all the details here: northcliffe.org.au/#inside

We have been featuring selected entries on our Facebook page. If you Facebook, pay a visit: www.facebook.com/NorthcliffeCRC/

CRC Funding Uncertainty

Perhaps you've seen CRCs mentioned in the regional news bulletins lately? Most CRCs, like the Northcliffe CRC, are independent not-for-profit organisations (others are run by Shire councils). We tender for contracts to provide services and this is where the bulk of our revenue comes from. The contracts are paid using money from the Royalties for Regions scheme. Without these contracts most CRCs would need to close. Recently the Northcliffe CRC went through the protracted process of applying for a contract for the next 2 years, 9 months (33 months).

During the long wait to see if our tender was successful an election happened. Over the past week we have found out our new State Government will be offering those CRCs whose tender is successful 18 month rather than 33 month contracts. We are still waiting to find out if Northcliffe CRC will receive this support from the Government but we are confident that our tender was up to scratch.

Over this 18 month period the government are planning to conduct a review of the 'function and location' of CRCs. The results of this review will form the basis of future policy for funding of CRCs. The possibility of CRC closures has been flagged.

So this was both good news and bad news. The new government had the power not to fund CRCs and all. We now expect we will have two years to prove our worth to this government, and we are planning on participating in the review of CRCs to the maximum extent possible.

For around \$20 million government investment per year, over 100 small regional communities in WA are able to enjoy the presence of a local CRC. We believe CRCs offer excellent value for money in promoting "Economic, Business and Social Development in the Regions" (these are the objectives of the Royalties for Regions scheme). We now have a new government and a (reportedly extremely smart) new Minister (Alannah MacTiernan MLC) to convince of this.

We also have maximum sympathy for our friends at the Family Centre, who are also dealing with policy changes under the incoming government. The changes could severely hamper their abilities to continue operating. The centres were recently offered a three month reprieve while the government reconsiders their situation.

A-copper-lypse the Sequel

In February we wrote about the horrific idea of our copper phone lines being ripped out. This is a melodramatic way of describing the prospect of the government removing the requirement for Telstra to provide phone lines to all premises. We have further news...

On 19 June the Productivity Commission released its final report on the Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation (TUSO). Despite scores of submissions from the bush, including one from the NCRC, the Commission has recommended an end to the TUSO landline phone guarantee from 2020. Telstra has a contract to maintain our copper runs until 2032 but this will bring forward that date by twelve years. It will be incredibly expensive for government to negotiate their way out of that contract. The result of that expensive mistake will be to downgrade rural communications and end our landline phone and ADSL services.

Instead, all subsidies for bush telecommunications are likely to end up directed to Satellite and Mobile black spot programs. We need the copper too, while we're waiting for fibre optics and other better NBN services (fixed wireless) to come to the bush. If the government adopt this policy it will directly affect us in Northcliffe. The NCRC without ADSL internet will be need to make some big changes which will hurt our users. Many Northcliffians have poor or non existent mobile coverage (although that at least is in the process of improving) and many households in town rely on ADSL internet.

Oh, they have also recommended that the pay phones go, in 2018.

NCRC will be contacting our Federal MPs and Upper House representatives to ask the government to ignore these recommendations and recognise the continued need for our copper phone lines, up until the point that better alternatives than Satellite are available. Satellite is terrible for voice calls, especially local ones (satellite user to satellite user). Satellite and mobile internet are severely restrictive in the amount of data they allow for a household. Satellite connections go out with the power and in rainy and overcast conditions. I don't need to tell you all how often that would affect us here.

We shouldn't even be talking about this until plans are in place for a better alternative to our copper. It would be exceedingly perverse for our multi billion dollar NBN to become an excuse for government to downgrade our rural communications.

Youth Sponsorship Announcements

The CRC saw some great applications from Northcliffe kids for Youth Sponsorship funding this year, and we were happy to be able to fund these three great projects:

- Rylee: \$340 toward a WAAPA dancing workshop
- Maddison: \$500 for 25 singing lessons with Frances Armstrong.
- Saffron and Imogen. \$940 support - Cake Decorating Venture.

For cases of applications which are not funded the CRC will be writing the applicants feedback as constructive as we can manage, and inviting them to reapply in a future round.

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday 10 am to 5 pm • Thursday 10 am to 6 pm • Friday 9 am to 6 pm

