



**Chevron Australia Pty Ltd**  
ABN 29 086 197 757  
L24, QV1, 250 St George's Tce  
Perth WA 6000, Australia  
GPO Box S1580, Perth WA 6845  
Tel 61 8 9216 4000  
Fax 61 8 9216 4444

15<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Hon. Simon O'Brien MLC  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
Perth, WA 6000

**Petition No. 52 – Telecommunications Service Barrow Island**

Dear Chair.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Petition No 52 – Telecommunication Services Barrow Island. As Operator of the Gorgon Project, Chevron Australia is aware of the matters raised regarding telecommunications on Barrow Island.

The telecommunication system selected prior to the Gorgon Project's final investment decision in 2009 was deemed suitable at that time to meet demand and technology requirements. The decision was made to connect remote Barrow Island to the Australian communications system via two microwave links. These links provide a total capacity of 310mb and provide shared services to Barrow Island and other regional users such as Varanus Island and the Montebello Islands.

Earlier this year, capacity was upgraded and social use capacity on Barrow Island was improved by almost 50 percent. The additional capacity increased the number of calls possible at any time and improved overall data speed when using Telstra from smart phones, personal computers or other devices.

Of the current total capacity (310mb) on Barrow Island, in the order of two thirds is available to the workforce for social use in the form of free internet services, landline phone services and mobile services. The remaining capacity is required for operating the existing oilfield as well as providing office telecommunications.

In total, there are some 4332 in-room phones in individual room accommodation which provide free calls to numbers within Western Australian and calls to interstate and overseas numbers with a phone card. The in-rooms phones can receive calls from anywhere in Australia and from overseas. Room-to-room calls can be made throughout the accommodation facilities at no cost.

This is augmented by 38 public phones accessible 24 hours a day. Almost half of the public phones offer free calls to anywhere in Australia while the remainder offers free calls to numbers within Western Australian.

Phone cards need to be used to dial mobile and overseas numbers and, where applicable, interstate numbers. Should an individual wish to make a phone call not covered by the free services this can be done making use of a phone card (which are available for purchase onsite).

These on-island services are complemented by additional satellite services and provide connectivity either via a fixed cable or Wi-Fi to, free internet and landline phone services for camp residents. In-room free internet includes:

- free internet and computer consoles available in 4,000 rooms at the main construction village, Butler Park (through the TV);
- free Wi-Fi throughout the Causeway Construction Support Vessel (CCSV) which accommodates approximately 650 people;
- free Wi-Fi in majority of the existing WA Oil accommodation and the Gorgon Project Fly Camp and;
- free computers and access available at the CCSV, existing WA Oil accommodation and Gorgon fly camp.

Barrow Island experiences congestion at peak times when several thousand people attempt to use mobile devices at the same time and the system reaches capacity. This congestion can be a common occurrence in many places where there is a significant peak in demand for services in at a particular time. On Barrow Island this is compounded by the fact mobile phones are not permitted within work site areas due to safety requirements (mobile phones can be a dangerous distraction when working in or near moving plant). The mobile phone network experiences congestion during peak times (5pm to 8pm), when the majority of the workforce returns to their accommodation at the end of their shift. It is anticipated this is only a short-term issue for the remainder of peak construction (the Gorgon project is now over 80% complete), as the operational on-island workforce will be much smaller.

We continue to make efforts to improve bandwidth. These efforts to improve bandwidth and the telecommunication options available are regularly communicated to the workforce. We recognise the importance of communicating and educating the workforce about the availability of a reliable landline network as well as tips on maximising mobile phone reception on remote Barrow Island.

In addition we continue to investigate ways to meet and respond to the ever increasing workforce demand as a result of the dynamic growth in social media use (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) which was not anticipated in 2009. We are currently in the planning stages of installing a third link between Barrow Island and the mainland which will be connected to the new 120 metre tower currently under construction. Once completed part of its capacity will be available to service mobile phones and other devices on Barrow Island and the remainder used to operate the Gas Treatment Plant.

We have and will continue to look at practical ways to improve regional telecommunication services on Barrow Island during the remaining period of peak construction. However, we do not believe it is an issue which warrants a formal inquiry.

Yours sincerely

**Peter Fairclough**

General Manager Policy, Government and Public Affairs  
Chevron Australia