

## **Contractor Hits Telstra Cables**

SOME Dee Why homes and businesses have been without telecommunications for almost a week after a contractor cut three major underground cables with a jackhammer.

Some won't be reconnected until Sunday.

Landline connections to 1136 homes and business were cut on Monday, causing significant problems, especially for businesses that rely on the internet, faxes and email for custom.

FYI Property director Ben White said his repeated attempts to speak to Telstra's customer service operators ended in frustration.

"It's as if they couldn't care less," he said.

"As far as our customers are concerned, we've shut up shop because they can't ring or email us or find us on the internet.

"You don't realise how reliant you become on phones, faxes, internet and email."

Dee Why-based Oceania operations manager Anthony Long said that because his timber import and export company's server is at Dee Why, interstate branches are unable to communicate with each other, let alone with the head office in Francis St, Dee Why.

It also means credit-card payments aren't being received.

"Being the first working week of the financial year is busy enough as it is but this is crippling us," he said.

"We're losing orders to our competitors because we can't get into our system and find out what stock we've got or what the prices are.

"This is a nightmare it's totally hampering our business."

Telstra general manager for Greater Sydney Jon Grahame said the cost of the disruption will be enormous to customers and to Telstra.

"These were major cables that have been cut and the man-hours to repair them will be enormous," he said.

"We've got people working around the clock to repair them but the cost to us and to customers will be extremely high. And obviously we're at the mercy of the weather."

**Mr Grahame said the contractor who cut the cables "obviously didn't dial before digging".**

He said Telstra could fine the contractor or take them to court over the damage done.

Last month the State Government announced hefty fines, including possible jail terms, for people who cut power and gas lines but Telstra is covered by Federal legislation.

Mr Grahame said there is no cap on the fines that can be imposed on people who cut telecommunication cables.