

Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper

Submission Cover Sheet

Submission Information

This cover sheet should be attached to submissions made to the Department of Communications in relation to the Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper.

Contact Details

Name of respondent:	Amanda Millar MP, Member for Northern Victoria Region
Name of organisation:	Parliament of Victoria
Phone:	(03) 5427 2444
Email:	amanda.millar@parliament.vic.gov.au
Website (if applicable):	www.amandamillar.com
Date:	28 February 2014

Confidentiality and privacy

All submissions and comments, or parts thereof, will be treated as non-confidential information unless specifically requested, and acceptable reasons should accompany each request. Email disclaimers will not be considered sufficient confidentiality requests.

Respondents lodging a submission should be aware that submissions (excluding any information agreed to be treated as confidential information) will be made publicly available, including on the Department of Communications' website. Submissions and comments will be subject to freedom of information provisions. Despite a submission being identified as confidential or sensitive, submissions may be disclosed where authorised or required by law, or for the purpose of parliamentary processes.

Do you want all or parts of the submission to be treated as confidential? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, identify below which parts of the submission are to be treated as confidential (and provide a reason):

If the submission contains personal information of any third party individual, indicate on this Submission Cover Sheet if that third party individual has not consented to the publication of his or her personal information:

Submission Instructions

Submissions are to be made by **5:00pm (AEST) Friday 28 February 2014**.

Where possible, submissions should be lodged electronically, preferably in Microsoft Word or other text-based formats via the email address mobilecoverage@communications.gov.au

Alternatively, submissions can be sent to the postal address below (to arrive by the due date):

The Manager
Mobile Coverage Programme
Department of Communications
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2615

All submissions lodged will be acknowledged by the Department of Communications by email (or by letter if no email is provided). Respondents lodging a submission who do not receive acknowledgement of their submission should contact the Department. Submissions which are not acknowledged by the Department as being received may not be considered. Respondents should be aware that emails greater than 10Mb may not be successfully delivered.



Amanda Millar MP

Member of the Legislative Council for Northern Victoria

SUBMISSION TO THE MOBILE COVERAGE DISCUSSION PAPER

DARRAWEIT GUIM (VICTORIA) MOBILE COVERAGE

28 February 2014

Overview

The Northern Victoria Region is the largest single electorate represented in the Parliament of Victoria currently covering 108,378 square kilometres of the State's landmass.

This submission represents the needs of the Darraweit Guim community – within the Northern Victoria Region - with respect to mobile coverage in and around the town and heightened emergency risk to the community as a result of currently inconsistent and inadequate mobile telecommunications.

Darraweit Guim

Darraweit Guim is situated on Deep Creek - close to the eastern boundary of the Shire of Macedon Ranges. Darraweit Guim is a community of approximately 423 residents.

The community currently has a CFA Brigade, Red Cross Unit, Tennis Club, Community Hall, Catholic Church, Primary School, Landcare group. The community has no general store.

Darraweit Guim is situated 22 km south-east of Romsey and 12 km west of Wallan.

Recent Bushfire Activity

Darraweit Guim has recently experienced severe bushfire activity and, while only a handful of homes were lost in the fires which commenced on 9 February, the town did experience heavy losses of stock, fencing, equipment and sheds.



Amanda Millar MP

Member of the Legislative Council for Northern Victoria

As a result of these fires, the issue of poor mobile phone coverage was raised with me both individually by constituents and also as part of the community meeting in Darraweit Guim which occurred on 12 February after the main fire front had passed through the town and surrounding areas. As well as the specific communication problems which were experienced during the live fire activity and immediately afterwards given the damage to local infrastructure caused by the fires, it has been raised with me that poor mobile phone coverage is a regular difficulty experienced by residents in this area.

Given that local hilly terrain makes fire fighting activities very challenging, Darraweit Guim is an area which has regularly been subjected to major bushfire activity and this pattern is only likely to continue into the future.

Conclusion

On behalf of the constituents of Darraweit Guim and the surrounding areas, I request that detailed consideration be given to this submission and to the mobile telecommunication needs of this community. Whilst Darraweit Guim is not a remote community in any true sense, it nevertheless requires access to effective and consistent mobile coverage to ensure that the needs of residents are met at times of emergency events and also in the event of personal medical emergencies.

I request that Darraweit Guim be added to the Commonwealth Government's list of towns for consideration under this very welcome Mobile Coverage Review Programme.

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Amanda Millar MP

Member for Northern Victoria



Amanda Millar MP

Member of the Legislative Council for Northern Victoria

SUBMISSION TO THE MOBILE COVERAGE PROGRAMME DISCUSSION PAPER BLACKWOOD MOBILE COVERAGE

21 February 2014

The Northern Victoria Region is the largest single electorate represented in the Parliament of Victoria covering 108,378 square kilometres of the State's landmass. Many of its towns are formed by small, isolated communities with limited services including access to adequate telecommunications.

Northern Victoria also features large expanses of forested and prime agricultural land, susceptible to extreme bushfire risk. Every fire season Northern Victoria acts host to a number of serious bushfires risking life and property. The two most devastating bushfires in Australian living memory, that of Ash Wednesday in 1983 and Black Saturday in 2009, both occurred in Northern Victoria.

This submission represents the needs of the Blackwood community in particular, with respect to mobile coverage in and around the town and heightened emergency risk to the community.

Following the Victorian Electoral Boundaries Commission redistribution of electoral districts, Blackwood and surrounding areas will join the Northern Victoria Region as of the State Election to be held in November. Therefore, I have been actively consulting the community in preparing this submission.

Blackwood

Blackwood is a small community of 297 residents located on the Lerderderg River, 89 kilometres North West of Melbourne. The town is huddled amongst the 14,250 hectare Lerderderg State Park and the 70,000 hectare Wombat State Forrest. The township itself is forested.

Road access to Blackwood is restricted to one main road through the town (Greendale-Trentham Forest Road) and a number of narrow, unsealed surfaces that wind through the Lerderderg State Park.

A number of local residents have contacted me personally, my office and my colleague the Member for Western Victoria Region Mr Simon Ramsay MLC to raise their concerns regarding mobile coverage in the region. Both Mr Ramsay and I have raised the community's frustration at the lack of mobile coverage in the Victorian Legislative Council.

On visiting Blackwood personally, I was unable to receive mobile coverage anywhere in the town using two mobile phones on different carriers. This fact reflects the day to day frustrations of Blackwood residents.



Amanda Millar MP

Member of the Legislative Council for Northern Victoria

Blackwood and Emergencies

The fifth anniversary of the devastating Black Saturday bushfires as too the recent fire activity throughout Northern Victoria in February this year has reminded the Blackwood community about the dangers they also face.

On 19 January this year the Victorian Premier the Hon. Dr Denis Napthine opened Australia's first joint fire station and Community Fire Refuge. The Community Fire Refuge is fully ember protected and built to withstand the passage of a bushfire under Ash Wednesday conditions. The new community fire refuge offers the Blackwood community a last resort survival option in the event of a significant bushfire and its location was guided by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

As one of only three Community Fire Refuges chosen for construction by the Victorian Government, the Blackwood Community Fire refuge highlights the significant threat the community faces from bushfire danger.

For all Victorians, especially Northern Victorians, it remains an imperative that they equip themselves with a range of information sources during the bushfire services and during bushfire activity. These information sources include ABC Radio, ABC News 24 and Sky News Australia, the CFA and VicEmergency websites, the Victorian Fire Ready App and social media, including Twitter and Facebook accounts published by the CFA.

The majority of these resources rely on an adequate and reliable mobile phone service. Without such a service available to the Blackwood community, I share residents' concerns that they are not best equipped to respond to bushfire activity in their region safely.

Additionally, without adequate telecommunications, Blackwood residents are severely disadvantaged in contacting ambulance services during personal medical emergencies where time is of the essence. Blackwood's unique location means an ambulance services will have difficulties in reaching a patient in an adequate amount of time during a medical emergency.

Therefore, on behalf of Blackwood residents, I request and urge that Blackwood be added to the Commonwealth Government's list of towns for consideration under its Mobile Coverage Programme.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Millar'.

Amanda Millar MP
Member for Northern Victoria Region