

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:	[REDACTED]
Name of organisation:	Balonne Shire Council
Phone:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]
Website (if applicable):	www.balonne.qld.gov.au
Date:	28 Feb 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.

When telephoning or calling
please ask for:



28 February 2014

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

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Balonne Shire Council's submission to the Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper

Firstly, thank you for acknowledging through this programme that there is a need to address the current mobile coverage network across regional and remote Australia. The Balonne Shire Council commends the current Government for committing \$100 million to enhancing this essential infrastructure and service. The regional and remote communities of Australia should no longer be subjected to inferior mobile coverage which is impacting local economies, liveability and community safety.

The Balonne Shire Council is a small rural council located in south west Queensland which covers an area of 31,130km sq and has a population of 5,000 people. We are therefore aware first hand of the underlying issues and challenges of the current mobile coverage network in these parts of Australia.

Please find below, the Balonne Shire Council's address to the discussion paper.

Options:

- The Balonne Shire Council doesn't support option one as the delivery mechanism.
- The Balonne Shire Council supports option two or three as it is believed this will be derive the greatest outcomes in terms of connectivity for consumers through competition, equivalent open access and choice.

Current challenge and the regulatory environment:

When assessing how to administer the Mobile Coverage Programme, the Government needs to fore mostly understand that in large land mass areas of regional and rural Australia where there is no other

carrier available other than Telstra, this means 99.9% of consumers in these areas are now Telstra customers. Consequently, any new competitor needs to provide equal or better coverage, which is challenging in regional and rural areas where other carriers have no pre-existing infrastructure – starting from a baseline of zero. It is therefore going to take considerable efforts to get a new carrier established to a point where there is enough consumer confidence in the coverage to change carriers, and to have an environment which is truly 'competitive' especially across large land mass areas. The Balonne Shire Council acknowledges that there is no easy solution to the situation although we believe a review of the regulatory environment is critical to be able to overcome these challenges where there are existing coverage monopolies especially across large land mass areas.

Levels of financial contribution

To encourage carriers to establish in the large land mass areas with lower populations where there is currently no or monopoly coverage, greater financial contributions through the Mobile Coverage Programme maybe required to off-set predicted lower returns-on-investment.

Community engagement

Local government and communities must be engaged by the successful carrier from the commencement of their contract and this needs to be included as a provision within the contract terms. As part of the engagement process, predicted coverage should be disclosed and disseminated to communities and local governments.

Local government contribution to infrastructure development

Local government should be given the opportunity, should they chose to, to provide in-kind support towards the development of infrastructure, which would help to 'stretch the dollar further' for the Mobile Coverage Program on both a national and local level. Types of in-kind support could include; civil works, peppercorn lease arrangements, streamlining planning approval processes, and provision of concessional fees associated with planning approvals.

Delivery of both data and voice

Access to the internet in today's world is just as important as voice connectivity. Connection to the internet is vital during natural disasters to be able to link to social media, weather maps and alerts etc, and the internet has huge economic benefits by enabling people to continue to undertake business without geographical restrictions. The Mobile Coverage Program should therefore not just target or measure success against increased voice coverage but also measure against increased data coverage.

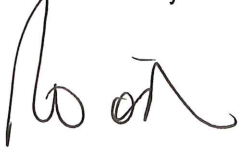
'Black spot' by definition

'Black spot' needs to be defined as an area of both no signal strength and low signal strength, and also where there is a low level of user experience relating to data transmission. 'Black spot' should not just be defined as an area with no signal strength.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Mobile Coverage Program and should you have any further queries please contact [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. O'May', written in a cursive style.

Peter O'May
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER