

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: Sarah Binger

Name of organisation: N/A

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Website (if applicable): N/A

Date: February 27, 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.

Dear Sir/Madam,

As a resident of a small rural township suffering appalling mobile handheld coverage I have taken interest in the Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper released by the Communications Department. Please find this to be my submission in response to the above mentioned paper.

It is my wish to outline to you why I am so disappointed and disheartened by the existing mobile services provided by the telecommunications companies in this area.

My place of residence is [REDACTED] Katandra West, Vic, only 26km from the major regional centre of Shepparton. Our landscape is flat terrain primarily used for irrigated dairy farming. It has become evident that the three service towers for mobile coverage are located at Tallygaroopna (12.7 km), Numurkah (25.9 km) and Dookie (26.5 km) of which Katandra West falls in the black spot missed by each of these towers, despite there being no landscape features to cause interruption or interference between these sites.

Our location is considered serviceable, and in some areas within the community this is probably true, however that does not take into account the significant degradation of mobile coverage within only a few hundred meters. The example I draw on to make this point is that only last month I moved my family from the East side of the Katandra West Township to the South side of the township, merely 600m from our previous residence. From this move we have experienced a decline from three bars of 3G network coverage on hand held mobiles, allowing basic usage, to one bar of 3G coverage and being unable to perform any functions on our mobile other than a SMS (of which struggles to send).

This is most distressing to us as my husband and I rely on our mobile phones as our only communication. We are a young family on one full time wage with a toddler and expecting another child in two months. We pay premium prices to have our mobile phones on plans with Telstra only to be provided substandard service. Due to the monthly costs associated with maintaining our existing mobile plans we are reluctant to spend more of our tight monthly budget on a home phone which will only get minimal use.

Our greatest concern in our new location is that due to our mobile phones being unusable in the home we are vulnerable in an emergency situation. Our existing mobile coverage would not allow communication with an emergency service or health professional in a time of need. With two young children this is a very real likelihood.

We do not have the internet connected to our home due to the costs associated with doing so. However, due to our current situation of no mobile coverage we have begun to investigate options to provide us with NBN and a home phone via Voice over Internet Protocol. These options are expensive and I am still not convinced of their effectiveness. VoIP is reportedly unreliable in this area and is dependant of power supply, something which cannot be relied upon during an emergency. My investigations have discovered that we are unable to trial home phone and broadband services on NBN fibre network, as the Telstra Information Summary outlines that service cannot be moved back to existing copper network.

We are fortunate in that a new NBN tower has been erected at the Recreational Reserve within the Township of Katandra West last year (only 400m from our new location) and is providing internet services to those who can afford to subscribe.

As detailed in the discussion paper on page 13, the 'NBN provides an opportunity to improve mobile phone coverage and competition'. If MNOs can be enticed to 'participate in share-build arrangements or co-locate equipment, it would lower the cost of providing mobile coverage'. This would undoubtedly benefit the MNOs as they obtain significant customers in such areas.

It is therefore my request that considerable attention and pressure be made via the Mobile Coverage Programme to encourage greater service and competition between MNO's to service Townships and rural areas to improve our standard of living and business opportunity. Regional areas such as ours, are so often forgotten about, yet we contribute significantly to the local economy.

I thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns in regard to mobile coverage.

Sincerely

Sarah Binger