

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:	The Hon Bob Baldwin MP
Name of organisation:	Federal Member for Paterson
Phone:	██████████
Email:	██████████
Website (if applicable):	
Date:	26 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):

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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 Mr Fletcher,

Further to your visit to my electorate of Paterson, I am writing to provide my own submission on how Mobile Black Spot funding could best be allocated to my electorate of Paterson. I have noted the issues in my electorate in priority order according to the feedback I have received from my constituents.

Paterson

I took the decision to take you and your adviser [REDACTED] to the town of Paterson as I consider the town and surrounds most in need of federal assistance to achieve adequate mobile coverage.

As you have witnessed, Paterson is a busy commuter route through which traffic transits between the Maitland and Dungog Local Government Areas. Paterson also has a train station on the line used by commuter trains travelling between Newcastle and Dungog.

Unfortunately it would appear that Paterson is just under the level of population needed to justify a mobile cell site. Optus did consider a site in recent years and lodged a development application to Dungog Council to build a base station. Despite Council's support for the site, Optus subsequently withdrew its application for reasons unknown to Council. I would speculate that Optus and other carriers have not pursued a site in Paterson due to its perception the town lacks sufficient population and potential users.

Despite the view of the mobile carriers, I have reported to Telstra (in my regular meetings) with General Manager of Telstra Countrywide - Hunter Mid North Coast, [REDACTED] that I receive more requests for better mobile coverage in Paterson than in any other similarly populated locality in my electorate.

Gresford/ East Gresford

The towns of East Gresford and Gresford (essentially linked) are located in the far North West corner of my electorate. It is slightly less populous than Paterson and is less of a commuter town but there is traffic passing through the towns on route between Dungog and Vacy.

Gresford is on the very fringe of mobile coverage presumably from Vacy and Dungog. This area's residents are second only to Paterson in calling for better mobile services.

Bucketts Way

This is a busy regional road linking Gloucester to the Lower Hunter. While there is some coverage at Booral and Stroud, there is little to no mobile coverage between the Pacific Highway exit near Karuah and the locality of Stroud Road apart from the town coverage at Booral and Stroud. Given the usage of this road, it could be considered for black spot coverage.

The Lakes Way

This is also a busy regional road linking Bulahdelah to the regional centre of Forster-Tuncurry. While there is some coverage at Pacific Palms and limited coverage at Bungwahl, there is barely any mobile coverage between the Pacific Highway exit near Bulahdelah and Forster apart from the town coverage at Pacific Palms and Bungwahl. Given the usage of this road, it could be considered for black spot coverage.

NBN Towers

As discussed with Mr Fletcher before and during our visit to Paterson, it just makes sense to add telephony to the NBN towers (particularly where there is limited mobile coverage provided by existing

networks) that are already under construction and due to commence construction shortly at multiple sites in my electorate and around Australia.

The Three towers in my electorate that have commenced construction are at Booral, Nabic and Darawank and services are due to go live Q3 of this year. (Maps copied below and also available on the public website - <http://www.nbnco.com.au/when-do-i-get-it/rollout-map.html>)

The three remaining towers at Stroud Town, Stroud North and Marshdale are due to begin construction in Q2, and to go live in Q3/4 this calendar year.

Boat Harbour

This area of Port Stephens is desperately in need of coverage. Unlike Paterson and East Gresford, there has been ongoing interest from the telecommunications companies to apply for and erect a site in this area.

In my recent discussions with Telstra Countrywide's Regional General Manager [REDACTED], he has indicated that Telstra want to provide coverage to the area but are concerned by recent decisions made by Port Stephens Council originally rejecting development applications for a digital television gap filler at Fishermans Bay (adjacent to Boat Harbour) and another mobile tower less than 10kms away at Corlette.

[REDACTED] has expressed an interest in working in partnership with the Commonwealth to fund a site at this location but the recent decisions of Port Stephens Council would remain a factor.

Port Stephens and Forster Tuncurry

I have received numerous complaints from my constituents regarding mobile data congestion issues in the busy (seasonal) holiday areas of Port Stephens and Forster Tuncurry. Though I have advised constituents that the mobile black spot program is primarily designed to resolve lack of mobile telephony coverage in regions the telecommunications companies are not interested in servicing, I have agreed it is appropriate that I raise these concerns in my submission.

It should be noted that Telstra have attempted to alleviate congestion issues in Port Stephens by submitting a development application for a site at Corlette. The development application was unanimously rejected by Port Stephens Councillors in the wake of some isolated community opposition. I have been contacted by many constituents subsequent to this meeting that have advised me that they did not agree with this decision and I have accordingly asked them to refer their complaints to their elected councillors.

Like the situation at Boat Harbour, the recent decisions of Port Stephens Council with regard to mobile tower development application is proving to be a mitigating factor in dealing with congestion issues.