

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:	██████████
Name of organisation:	Carlisle River Community Group
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Website (if applicable):	
Date:	21 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.

**Submission to the
Australian Government
Department of Communications**

by

Carlisle River Community Group

**\$100 million mobile telephone
coverage programme**



Introduction

Carlisle River is a small township in the Otway Ranges just under 200 km south-west of Melbourne and about 40 km south-west of Colac. It has a local church, community hall, state primary school and a branch of the CFA. The area is known mainly for dairying, but the immediate population of around 400 people is mixed and includes dairy farmers, other primary producers, and a range of small business people operating from home offices.

As the crow flies, Carlisle River is less than 20 km from Lavers Hill and not far from the tourist sites of the Great Ocean Road.

In the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission report, Carlisle River was identified as one of the 52 townships 'at risk' in the event of a bushfire.

Our town has no mobile phone coverage.

While this is extremely inconvenient to all our residents, our gravest concern is about facing the fire risk in the summer months without mobile coverage. Carlisle River is in the midst of the Otway Ranges with one road into town and one out, and we have no designated 'safer place' to gather in the event of a bushfire.

If a fire were to take hold in our area, it would be an inferno. Mobile phone coverage could make the difference between life and death for our population.

Unfortunately, being a small community, we are not a commercial proposition for Telstra or any of the other mobile network operators. Our only chance for mobile coverage is through the government assistance offered by this programme.

In December 2013 our local member for Corangamite, Ms Sarah Henderson, commissioned Telstra to undertake a desktop survey of telecommunications in our area and Telstra has confirmed that Carlisle River requires a base station.

This submission seeks to persuade you of the extreme urgency of a base station for Carlisle River. It also contains our suggestions for the criteria by which the Communications Department will select those townships most in need of a base station.

The Case for Carlisle River

1. Carlisle River fits very neatly into the \$80 million component of the Federal Government's funding "to improve mobile coverage along major transport routes, *in small communities and in areas that are prone to experiencing natural disasters*".
2. Carlisle River is one of the 52 townships identified by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission as being vulnerable in the event of a bushfire.
3. Telstra has established that Carlisle River requires a base station.

4. The residents of Carlisle River support unanimously the call for a base station in the town. We have worked strenuously to press our case for this since news of government funding became public. In December 2013, members of the Carlisle River Community Group met with Ms Henderson to discuss the issues facing Carlisle River; and in February 2014 we attended two community meetings at nearby Gellibrand – one with Ms Henderson and the Hon Paul Fletcher, appointed by Minister Malcolm Turnbull to take responsibility for the regional mobile phone programme; the other with Mr Bill Mundy from Telstra to discuss the issue of mobile phone coverage in the Otways.
5. Without mobile telephone coverage, residents of Carlisle River are unable to receive the early SMS bushfire warnings from the CFA. If a fire were to get hold at Carlisle River and landline communications cut off, it would be impossible to hear any news about the movement and behaviour of the fire, how neighbours were faring, if any elderly or vulnerable members of the community needed help, etc. People can quickly feel isolated and desperate which leads to poor decision making in a crisis.
6. The only way for Carlisle River to receive mobile phone coverage is through government funding. We are not commercially viable for the mobile network operators.
7. In the lead-up to last year's federal election for the seat of Corangamite, Ms Henderson campaigned hard on the issue of fixing mobile phone black spots in the Otways. It influenced many residents of Carlisle River to vote for her. We believe the government now needs to deliver on its promise.

Establishing the criteria for selecting townships to receive a base station

We would like to suggest that the following be considered as important criteria

- A. In Victoria, identified by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission as being one of the 52 townships most at risk.
- B. Being a small town and not commercially viable for any of the mobile network operators.
- C. Telstra has established that the town requires a base station.
- D. The residents seek a base station as a matter of urgency.

About the Carlisle River Community Group

The Carlisle River Community Group (CRCG) is a not-for-profit organization, established in May 2003.

We liaise between our community and the Colac Otway Shire Council as well as authorities such as Vicroads, the State Department of Environment and Primary Industries and the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority.

A key role is to raise funds (usually small-scale grants) for creating and/or improving amenities in the town. We also place a high value on encouraging social interaction within the community and promoting pride in Carlisle River and its surrounds.

Tourists and mobile business operators pass through our remotely located town and we strive to provide attractive and appropriate amenities for rest stops.

All our members volunteer their time. We meet once every eight weeks to support our 'Township Master Plan' and plan fund raising.

We produce a bi-monthly newsletter that goes to all households in Carlisle River, Chapple Vale and Kennedy's Creek. It contains stories of local general interest, including reports from the school, as well as important dates and rosters, such as the CFA truck run.

The CRCG also conducts working bees to maintain landscaped areas funded under Local Partnership Agreements, such as the Carlisle River frontage reserve on Vicroads land. On average, our Group has up to 15 members annually and the same number of non-member volunteers.

