

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: Mark Dwyer

Name of organisation: Dwyer Farm Co

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Email: [REDACTED]

Website (if applicable):

Date: 28-02-2014

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.

My family and I run a mixed farming operation 70kms north of Griffith in South Western NSW. I am also Captain of our local RFS brigade.

I can offer no opinion on the 3 options for the Federal Governments proposed \$80million mobile expansion project except to say that I'm sure it won't be enough to solve the problems we have with mobile and wireless broadband coverage.

Throughout the discussion paper there are numerous mentions of "competitive tensions" and "value for money" for the Commonwealth. These notions seem illogical to consider if we are talking about expanding coverage to include more of the huge 1-2% of the nation that is not included in the original "99%", or those areas "covered" but very inadequately.

In my opinion the vast area of our rural and agricultural economy combined with low population and high transport costs, make the application of any market based policy approach inappropriate from the outset, regardless of whether we are talking about telecommunications, fuel pricing, postal services, medical services, grain handling etc. It's also my opinion that the original deregulation and subsequent privatization of Telstra was the wrong model for a large country with a small population. Regional areas were always going to be left behind, no matter what the value of production from those areas.

I believe that any expansion of the mobile network should be done through a cooperative approach with MNOs sharing the infrastructure provided to avoid duplication and reduce costs. I would support any proposal to combine the resources of the NBN Co. and MNOs to expand mobile coverage and improve wireless broadband performance.

We have been using wireless broadband from its outset in this area after failed attempts with satellite broadband and unusable dial-up services. Initially the wireless broadband was excellent but in the last couple of years the capacity and speed have dropped to the point where it is unusable on weekends and at certain times during the day. It seems as if the uptake has outstripped the networks capacity.

I would also like to say that all of us are becoming more and more dependent on this technology. Mobile phone and Internet have become indispensable for all aspects of running a farm business.

My wife worked from home for a London based travel company for several years, and whilst that company is no longer operating, I have to say that the wireless broadband performance recently has been so slow it would have been impossible for my wife to have continued anyway.

From the perspective of my role as a brigade captain with the RFS, we have a large area of the Cocoparra National Park as well as a large area of State forest in our brigade, in addition to many thousands of hectares of farmland, some of which are corporately farmed with no-one living on that land. Also there is a 20km stretch of the Mid Western Highway that we are expected to monitor for motor vehicle accidents, which are not uncommon because of the terrain involved. In all this area the mobile service is patchy at best and in places non-existent. We can operate but the centralization of RFS control is making our brigade function increasingly dependent on electronic delivery of everything from mapping to fire control coordination. Any improvement on mobile network coverage could only enhance our ability to stop small fires becoming major ones.

I appreciate the opportunity to make this submission to the discussion. I believe that mobile phone coverage and broadband (in whatever form) offer real opportunity for all of Regional Australia in ways we haven't even discovered yet. Unfortunately if we don't make these improvements these opportunities will be lost and resources already invested in existing infrastructure will be lost as well.

Mark Dwyer