

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

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Date:	28 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.

I would like to address Question 15 – ***Do the proposed assessment criteria achieve the right balance to deliver the best value for money outcomes?***

In response to this question, I believe there is more to consider when assessing which areas represent best value for money than can be calculated by using the number of premises located within the proposed new area or likewise from measuring the length of a National or State Highway.

Regional communities such as Dysart contribute greatly to Australia's export income through their mining and agricultural industries, providing employment and driving our nation's economic growth. For regional economies to remain strong they require the same access to infrastructure and services which allow them to remain competitive with metropolitan areas. At present this is not the case. The proposed method to determine service priority would disadvantage our area and others like it which may not have the population density to receive a preference for the allocation of funding. Our small population already hinders our ability to secure a variety of local service outlets or maintain the presence of local branches for services such as banking etc.

In order to maintain productive capacity and competitive viability, regional businesses in these smaller communities need to access services that are unavailable locally online, and therefore reliable telecommunication networks are even more crucial in order to; manage their business, capitalise on opportunities, remain current with emerging national and international markets and access global supply chains when appropriate. Further the overall sustainability of smaller regional communities depends on access to social, educational and medical services which we are increasingly relying on telecommunication services to 'fill the gaps' due to 'cost effectiveness'. Again the use of population figures for justification in assessment disadvantages us.

Richelle Toshack
Community Development Officer
Dysart Community Support Group Inc.



Therefore the overall cost efficiencies of online service delivery need to be included when considering areas that are relegated to this model of accessing services, and these factors should be weighted to offer these areas higher priority for improved Telecommunication services.

Lastly, the length of National or State Highways and arterial roads does not reflect the frequency of their use and the true benefits for each road of improved external antenna or handheld service. Many of the highways throughout the Isaac region are Key mining and agricultural areas and therefore significant transport routes, well utilised due to not only the general operations of these businesses but also increases in their drive-in, drive-out workforce. These 'roads' require improved telecommunications access for both the rural properties which boarder them and the safety of users. It can be several times a year that the roads accessing our township are flooded and subject to consequent dangerous conditions. These roads are currently in black spots for Telstra users with most of the township and surrounding area having service completely unavailable with other National Mobile Network Operators. Many visitors to our area travel the distance only to find that when they require mobile coverage it is unavailable to them. In times of accident or emergency this can create a critical situation.

In Summary, there are many factors which should be evaluated when considering the value and outcomes of mobile coverage improvements. The proposed methods outlined in the discussion paper could work to further marginalise residents of small rural/regional communities and do more to 'widen the gap' than provide solutions to accessibility.

