

29 July 2014

The Honourable Malcolm Turnbull MP  
Minister for Communications

Via [REDACTED]  
and [REDACTED]  
Commonwealth Government - Department of Communications

Dear Minister,

**Re: Commonwealth Government's Mobile Coverage Programme and Communications on the Mornington Peninsula**

On behalf of Mayor Antonella Celi and Chief Executive Officer Dr Michael Kennedy OAM, I thank you and refer to our meeting hosted by the Honourable Bruce Billson MP in Frankston on 2 July 2014, in relation to the Commonwealth Government Mobile Phone Coverage Programme and our discussions more broadly on Communications issues including the future rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

The Mornington Peninsula Shire has been very active in this space and we welcome the opportunity to provide further information to the Commonwealth on these matters.

**Executive Summary:**

- The Shire prepared a detailed submission to the Victorian State Government in February 2014 with respect to the \$100 Commonwealth Government Mobile Coverage Programme, outlining network coverage and capacity issues which have significant impacts on public safety and economic development.
- The Shire raised issues of the economic and social impact of black spots on local communities, with the impact on tourism a real concern in our submission to the State Government, which was reflected in the State submission to the Commonwealth.
- Improving mobile communications is required to better inform decision making in the event of an emergency and to support the principle of adopting a shared responsibility and shared obligation with communities and businesses to manage emergency events and disasters such as bushfires.
- The Shire has been meeting with key stakeholders concerning communications issues since July 2013 known as the '*Network Coverage on the Mornington Peninsula Working Group*'. These meetings have assisted in the fast tracking of appropriate tower locations and the upgrade of 34 base stations to LTE 4G. Most recently this working group hosted the Hon Paul Fletcher MP and the Hon Greg

Hunt MP to discuss communications more broadly and to express key stakeholders views about communications issues on the Mornington Peninsula.

- The critical drivers for improved mobile coverage ought to be better public safety and economic development through digital communications, meaning a focus on disaster-prone area coverage, busy transport corridors and populated black spots.
- Numerous communities on the Mornington Peninsula are impacted due to the significant increase in population over peak seasonal periods and the associated high bushfire risk locations that many come to visit or live.
- Some areas of the Mornington Peninsula Shire (particularly the significant tourist locations) receive an increased load of up to 400% on the network, often well beyond the network capacities ability to cope.
- The Mornington Peninsula is a unique part of Victoria with already significant pressure on the performance of the various telecommunication networks coverage and capacity.
- The Shire welcomes any public or private funding to further improve black spot issues and network problems the community face. In consultation with local CFA fire brigades, community members, chambers of commerce and particularly the local tourism industry, there is evidence to suggest significant public safety and business impacts on communications failures including black spots and 'drop outs' occur due to coverage and capacity issues on the Mornington Peninsula.
- Given that the Commonwealth funding is only targeted outside of the areas within the ABS 'urban centres' classification, the investment focus priorities for the Mornington Peninsula should include:
  - Tuerong
  - Red Hill
  - Red Hill South
  - Main Ridge
  - Balnarring and Balnarring Beach
  - The land on the Mornington Peninsula National Park side of Melbourne Road from the township of Rye through to the township of Portsea
  - St Andrews Beach
  - Cape Schanck
  - Flinders
  - Shoreham
  - Somers
  - Point Leo
- We have attached a map showing current communication infrastructure, the area of the Mornington Peninsula eligible within the ABS classification, as well as overlaying Council owned land whereby there may be opportunities to investigate that land as part of in-kind support to any potential funding the Mornington Peninsula attracts under the programme. Refer Appendix 1: Communications on the Mornington Peninsula

## **Background:**

The Mornington Peninsula Shire attracts approximately five million tourists annually and has the highest number of events outside Melbourne City Council anywhere in Victoria. This influx, which predominantly occurs over summer, brings significant economic and social outcomes for our communities, but also brings considerable challenges, particularly on issues associated with traffic congestion, stresses on existing communications infrastructure and community safety. Whilst the increased demand on the mobile network is an obvious consequence of additional events and visitors to our Shire, it also creates challenges in sharing information and ability for emergency services and local government to deliver its services to the community in a timely and effective manner.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire has many bushfire risk locations. Many of these locations receive an influx of tourists over the Summer period. A survey undertaken by the Mornington Peninsula Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee in 2013 revealed that this transient population do not always have a good understanding of bushfire risk, nor do they have individual bushfire plans. These people become reliant on technology to receive bushfire warnings, making the issue of black spots, or an inability of the network to cope with the demand, a significant issue. Whilst we work closely with CFA on the promotion of the importance on not relying on one source to receive bushfire warnings and information, we need to appreciate tourist populations are incredibly reliant on their mobile phones and tablet devices.

Many popular tourist activities and community events on the Mornington Peninsula often occur in high bushfire locations on high bushfire risk days. Many of these events could be considered to be of State and National significance, with the popularity of these events placing even further pressure on the network capacity and the ability of the infrastructure to cope, given the already high demand for services during the peak season.

## **Issues:**

In consultation with local CFA fire brigades and community members, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest there are significant public safety impacts on network coverage and capacity over the Summer period on the Mornington Peninsula. In past meetings with Telstra we have been informed some areas of the Mornington Peninsula Shire (particularly the significant tourist locations) receive an increased load of up to 400% on the network, often well beyond the network capacities ability to cope.

Notwithstanding our understanding that the Commonwealth funding is only targeted outside of the areas within the ABS 'urban centres' classification the areas of concern for us include the following:

- Tuerong
- Red Hill
- Red Hill South
- Main Ridge
- Balnarring and Balnarring Beach
- The land on the Mornington Peninsula National Park side of Melbourne Road from the township of Rye through to the township of Portsea
- St Andrews Beach
- Cape Schanck
- Flinders
- Shoreham
- Somers and Point Leo

### **National Broadband Network (NBN):**

Whilst the Mornington Peninsula Shire understands the future of the NBN is not part of the coverage programme funding, the Shire believes the future rollout of the NBN should be focussed initially on the Mornington Peninsula Shire's key activity centres of Rosebud, Mornington and Hastings.

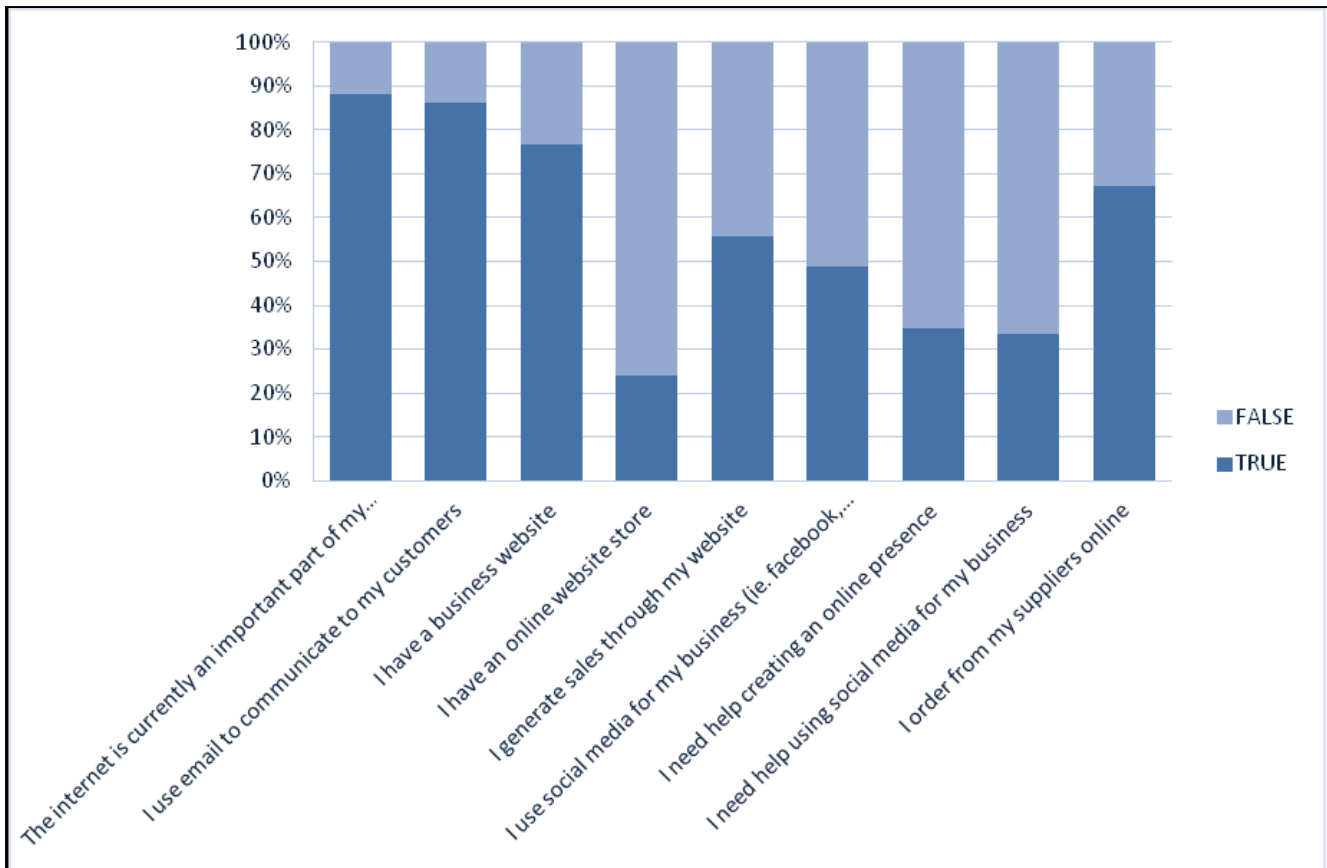
To support that view, the Shire commissioned the 'Mornington Peninsula Business Survey' in both 2012 and 2014. Key findings included the following:

Survey 2014: There were 337 respondents to this survey

- 56% of businesses did not have a website that allowed customers to purchase on-line.
- Of the 44% that did have ecommerce sites, 39% had their own site and 6% used a third party site.
- Of those businesses that sold on-line, the majority (43%) attributed less than 10% of their total sales to Internet sales.
- There was a variance in the remaining businesses that sold on-line in terms of what % they sold. Some business sold up to 40% on-line whilst others sold 70+% on-line.

Survey 2012: There were 659 respondents to this survey

- Respondents believed the arrival of the NBN would improve marketing, improve business management, make business quicker and faster, provide cost savings, improve customer service, make their business more efficient and increase business and sales.



**Table Above: Responses to true / false questions relating to technology**  
**Action:**

Since July 2013, the Mornington Peninsula Shire, in partnership with other key stakeholders, has been working to improve the network coverage and capacity issues the Mornington Peninsula Shire experiences.

This was a key driver for the formation of the '*Network Coverage on the Mornington Peninsula Working Group*'. This group comprises senior representation from Telstra, Mornington Peninsula Shire, CFA, the Emergency Management Commissioner, the Honourable Greg Hunt MP and has met on numerous occasions. At our most recent meeting of 30 June 2014, additional stakeholders included the Honourable Paul Fletcher MP, Chambers of Commerce, Optus, Vodafone and other Councils in our region. This allowed Mr Fletcher to provide an update on the coverage and black spot funding program as well as the NBN. It also provided an opportunity for all carriers and Councils to understand that the funding will involve a rigorous competitive site selection process. The Shire therefore believes our existing joint organisational working networks, background research and vast ownership of land on the Mornington Peninsula puts us in a good position to secure funding.

Furthermore, I am pleased to inform you Telstra has reported at the meeting of 30 July 2014 the following improvements have been made on the Mornington Peninsula:

- The upgrade of 34 locations within the Mornington Peninsula Shire to LTE (4G) capability. These upgrades double the capacity of each of the locations which will improve the transmission of data considerably.
- One new tower location with a current planning application lodged with the Mornington Peninsula Shire and two new planning permits recently issued for new tower sites in Melbourne Rd, Blairgowrie and Hotham Rd, Sorrento.

These improvements and upgrades are economically viable from Telstra's perspective. The multi-agency working group has been a great success from an advocacy and relationship building perspective. It should be acknowledged Telstra's commitment to upgrade the existing infrastructure and enhance the network coverage and capacity with additional base stations has been the key driver of these successes.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire also believes the telecommunication providers should be undertaking research with local communities on the extent of the black spot issues. Local community feedback should be pivotal to any funding made available to network coverage improvements. We understand that despite 'technical network coverage mapping' by telecommunication providers often suggesting there is not a black spot issue, feedback from local residents who actively live and work in these areas suggest otherwise. A recent survey of local businesses clearly demonstrates the negative impacts of poor mobile communications on these businesses.

In conclusion, given all these factors, we believe the Mornington Peninsula is a unique part of Victoria with already significant pressure on the performance of the various telecommunication networks coverage and capacity. We would welcome any public or private funding to further improve black spot issues and network problems the community face. Many communities on the Mornington Peninsula experience significant increase in population over the peak seasonal periods and the associated high bushfire risk locations. The Mornington Peninsula Shire will continue to work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders and welcomes the opportunity to be actively considered for Commonwealth funding under this programme.

Should you have any further queries concerning this information please contact me on 5950 1830 or [stephen.chapple@mornpen.vic.gov.au](mailto:stephen.chapple@mornpen.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

**Director – Sustainable Environment**  
**MORNINGTON PENINSULA SHIRE**

Cc Mayor Antonella Celi, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council  
 Dr Michael Kennedy OAM, Chief Executive Officer, Mornington Peninsula Shire  
 Hon Paul Fletcher MP Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for Communications  
 Hon Greg Hunt MP, Minister for Environment  
 Hon Bruce Billson MP, Minister for Small Business  
 Hon Gordon Rich-Phillips MLC, Minister for Technology (State of Victoria)  
 Craig Lapsley, Emergency Management Commissioner, Victoria

## Appendix 1: Communications on the Mornington Peninsula Map (sent electronically – overview below)

