

# 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:	[REDACTED]
Name of organisation:	Paroo Shire Council
Phone:	[REDACTED]
Email:	[REDACTED]
Website (if applicable):	www.paroo.qld.gov.au
Date:	24 <sup>th</sup> February, 2013

#### 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](mailto: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 for Mobile Coverage Programme

**Contact:**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## **Introduction**

The Paroo Shire is located in South West Qld and encompasses an area of 47 688 km<sup>2</sup> and hosts the towns of Cunnamulla, Eulo, Yowah and Wyandra. The area has a population of approximately 1957 of which 1100 reside in Cunnamulla (the main centre in the Shire) and the remainder are dispersed over this large area. Cunnamulla is 805km from Brisbane and markets by road so with tyranny of distance and isolation, mobile coverage is vital. Cunnamulla is situated at the crossroads for; Sydney to Darwin, Melbourne to Kurumba and Brisbane to Adelaide so roads within the Shire are of great importance as major transport routes and pathways for the ever growing Tourism market.

This Shire suffers from limited and non-existent phone coverage which creates risks for residents and the travelling public. Whilst mobile phone coverage is acceptable for a 10km radius around Cunnamulla, Yowah and Wyandra, the town of Eulo and the vast majority of the region has either no coverage or very poor coverage. The Paroo Shire has been an active advocate on telecommunication issues in this region for a number of years and believe it is reasonable in this day and age to assume that mobile phones should be considered an essential “standard phone service”. Our Shire is committed to economic growth and stimulation and identifies telecommunication infrastructure as critical to our sustainability and expansion but current telecommunication services fail to meet expectations and inhibits our growth potential.

The needs of people living and travelling in this area are not dissimilar to the needs of people living in metropolitan areas but entail greater challenges in satisfying them. Health, education, law enforcement, emergency services, tourism, business and welfare are examples of some of the services that need to incorporate the use of the telecommunications network for delivery of their services.

## **Current Coverage**

Currently along the highways there is great concern over the lack of mobile coverage and with isolation due to the distance between reception and often lack of traffic on road equates to a major safety issue.

There is mobile coverage in the towns of Cunnamulla, Wyandra and Yowah and a surrounding area of approximately 20-25km. The township of Eulo, 68km west of Cunnamulla has no mobile coverage.

## **Mitchell Highway**

- Barrington (NSW Border) – Cunnamulla (118km) There is no reception until approximately 20km south of Cunnamulla
- Cunnamulla – Wyandra (100km) Reception is lost approximately 20km north of Cunnamulla and is not available again until closer to Wyandra.

### Balonne Highway

- Bollon - Cunnamulla (178km) Reception is lost approximately 20km west of Bollon and is not available until 20km East of Cunnamulla

### Bulloo Development Road

- Cunnamulla – Eulo (68km) and then the next town with Mobile service is Thargomindah (130km) Reception is lost approximately 20km west of Cunnamulla
- Eulo- Hungerford (122km) and there is no mobile service anywhere in this vicinity at all

### **Current Infrastructure & Possible Solutions**

With the astronomical cost of infrastructure and installation of Mobile Towers throughout Australia a solution in this Shire could be the upgrade of a number of the Telstra communication towers which are already in strategic positions and this would enable coverage to a larger area.

### **Reasons for the need to improve coverage**

- Safety is the greatest issue for establishing an accessible and reliable mobile telecommunication service.
- Mobile phone service would help with accidents and emergency situations
- No mobile coverage has had critical affects on the outcomes of serious life threatening incidents on rural properties or long stretches of road. In these situations the victims can be isolated for several hours prior to being found or Emergency Services being notified.
- The Paroo River at Eulo frequently floods and The Bulloo Development Road can be cut for several weeks. There is no mobile service in the area or public phone installed on the western side of the river so people can be stranded without the ability to notify the Eulo flood truck or boat to transport them into town.
- Many visitors travelling the roads are unable to call for assistance when they are stranded.
- The Qld government has recognised the four pillars of the economy as Tourism, Agriculture, Construction and Resources and 2013 saw the tourism numbers to our Shire increase by 25% and as the numbers increase there is a greater need for reliable telecommunication services, both for safety and connectivity.
- Rural workers are often working in isolation and UHF radios do not cover the

distances needed if problems are encountered or accidents occur. With OH&S workers need to be contactable to enable safe work practices.

- Improved telecommunication would provide a greater opportunity for diversification of the economy through accessing the digital economy as it improves market competitiveness. Agriculture has the capacity to capitalise on a range of telemetry innovations and labour saving solutions to increase efficiency however without the assurance of effective mobile coverage Graziers are unable to integrate these systems into their businesses.
- Providing rural and remote businesses with a reliable and accessible mobile communication service gives these enterprises the opportunity to grow. The potential of teleworking enables significant income diversification and generates opportunities for primary producers while remaining on their properties and in the community.
- Residents on rural properties have been advised that the old microwave technology situated on properties is outdated and will not be fixed for much longer and residents were to use mobile phones.
- The lack of mobile phone coverage will continue to have a negative impact on this area with safety issues, business development opportunities, the expanding tourism trade and education of children in remote areas. Technology is a fast evolving commodity, and community, businesses and organisations are continually embracing these technological advancements to ensure their sustainable growth.
- With no improvement to telecommunication in our region we will see the population lose touch with advancements in the technological world especially with changes in user behaviour and preferences towards the use of mobile phone and internet for accessing information throughout every facet of life.
- There is a need to connect to the internet remotely for both business and personal use
- People on the land now have the ability to market their own product but landholders in our shire are at a disadvantage to those in larger regional areas as the internet cannot be accessed remotely.
- Primary producers often suffer isolation and this can result in rural suicide – access to mobile phone can keep people connected
- There is an inability to attract and retain staff as many potential employees are not interested in working in an area without technology
- Graziers do not sit in their offices on landlines: they are in the paddocks getting the job done

Due to distinctiveness of geographical isolation and the concentration of residents, our Shire is afforded the same opportunities as many metropolitan areas. Yet these same characteristics mean that residents rely more heavily upon telecommunication for safety, business and social connectivity.

To ensure a sustainable future for the Paroo Shire, we believe that the above issues significantly affect the growth within the local economy and business efficiency.