

# 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: William J Pyke

Name of organisation:

Phone:

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Website (if applicable):

Date: 24-02-14

#### 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):

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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-**

**Improvement of mobile phone and internet coverage in the Northern Grampians, Victoria.**

This submission relates to the North West Grampians, covering the localities of Laharum and Wartook, in the Municipality of the Rural City of Horsham, Victoria, 3401.

This area suffers from inadequate, and in many areas no Mobile coverage, and substandard internet coverage.

The area is adjacent to a major National Park. The community in general derives income from agriculture, horticulture and tourism.

**Poor or non-existent mobile service**

The area is severely disadvantaged by the lack of mobile coverage:

- \* Local and international visitors expect a mobile service for both planning trips and general communication.

- \* Safety and security are jeopardised by the lack of service
- \* Business is hampered by the lack of service

The long battle by the community for improved mobile coverage in the area has repeatedly been given the response by the authorities that the population is too low to justify the construction of the required infrastructure. This ignores the fact that the area has very large visitor numbers:

1. indicated by approximately 300 visitor beds in the immediate tourism area.
2. many day visitors come to enjoy the National Park. One of Victoria's top visitor areas.
3. large numbers of school groups regularly visit the area for extended outdoor adventure activities.
4. large numbers of rock climbers and hikers regularly camp in the area.

All these groups have an expectation of, and requirement for, a modern and reliable mobile coverage. They generally express shock and surprise at the inadequacy or unavailability of the service. Increasingly visitors rely on smart phones for security, Apps for safety and navigation as well as general communication.

The need becomes even greater when the requirements of emergency services are considered.

Fires are regular events in the area, and recently the area was subject to a major disrupting flood. In every event the inadequate, or in many cases, total lack of mobile service has hampered and restricted the control and rehabilitation of the event. This affects the response and efficiency of CFA, Parks Victoria, DEPI, Police, Ambulance, Schools, Local Government workers, health workers, as well as local citizens and visitors.

In January this year, 52,000 ha of this area were burnt by an extremely hot and erratic bush fire. Many homes were lost, stock and wildlife were killed, fences and Park facilities destroyed. The lack of mobile service in this area caused multiple communication problems for emergency services, residents and visitors. This was exacerbated by the failure of the land-line service early in the fire.

The BlazeAid organisation has been helping with the restoration of the area after the recent fire. Top of their list of 'things to bring' for volunteers is "Mobile Phone", followed by "this is a must, as it is vital for the safety of our volunteers that they can be contacted and contact others while working". Not in the Laharum Wartook area.

Most contractors, tradespeople, agents and farmers rely on mobile phones to conduct their business. Sadly, they cannot do this in this area.

## **Internet**

The same arguments can be used for the need for improved Internet service. Currently the major service for Internet is via satellite, with a small proportion of copper wire users and a few people able to use 3G wireless. The satellite currently offers a service on a par with dial-up for the majority of business hours. The proposed introduction of the new satellites is expected to improve the service which will still be plagued by long latency.

Any planned improvement in the mobile service should be accompanied by the installation of NBN wireless to bring communications up to a level expected in our modern day era, and which is already available in many European, Asian, American and third world countries. The introduction of wireless should be made simpler and more economic by the fact that fibre is already available at the local Laharum exchange.