

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: Dr Neil Shaw

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Date: 22 June 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

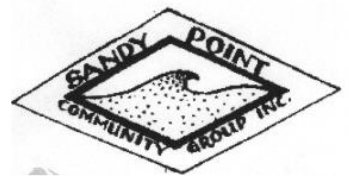
Submissions are to be made by **5:00pm (AEST) Friday 28 February 2014**.

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.



8 March, 2014

Mr Paul Fletcher MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Communications
and Mr Russell Broadbent MP

Dear Sir

RE: Mobile phone and wireless internet connections at Sandy Point (area code 3959)

Sandy Point is a small township in South Gippsland which has very poor mobile phone and wireless internet service. We have for years been trying to have the situation improved and we are writing to you for help.

Background:

Sandy Point is a sea-side town with about 640 houses but a permanent population of only about 200 people. About 40% are retired people and the remainder are doctors (3), nurses, school teachers and business people who commute to nearby towns like Foster.

Most houses are used as holiday accommodation with the township population exceeding 3,500 over school holidays, especially summer. Throughout the year there is a steady flow of visitors who rent many of the beach houses and visit nearby Wilsons Prom tourist attraction.

Mobile phone and internet connections are normally poor and in some locations non-existent, but during times of high influx of visitors and holiday makers the connections are virtually impossible. Low signal strength is not the only issue, it appears that the capacity or bandwidth cannot cope with the huge amount of traffic.

Consequently there are serious concerns and deep emotional issues among both local residents and visitors to our area. People are most upset and our tolerance of the situation is boiling over.

What we have done:

- Our local South Gippsland Shire Council has acknowledged the problem and has passed a formal resolution to offer some assistance, but so far there has been no tangible outcome.
- Russell Broadbent MP, the Federal Member for our area of McMillan, has also been made aware of our dire communications situation, but again no result of feedback so far.
- Over the years the Sandy Point Community Group has tried to lobby Telstra, but to no avail. We have not been able to obtain a response from any Manager at an appropriate level.
- Head Office of the CFA in Melbourne is well aware than any emergency SMS message regarding a threatening bushfire might not reach many people in our area. This is especially relevant because Sandy Point is one of the 52 towns identified by the Bushfire Royal

Commission as being at high risk. We have asked CFA to lobby Telstra to have this situation improved.

Impact on Businesses:

Apart from a small General Store the main business in Sandy Point is holiday accommodation. We have a magnificent beach called Waratah Bay and a fabulous environment which is promoted by authorities like "Tourism Victoria". However when visitors come to our area they complain bitterly about such poor communications.

Business people and professional people bring their families for a holiday, but they also need to be in regular contact with their businesses elsewhere (Melbourne). When this cannot be achieved they depart prematurely, much to the disappointment of the families as well as to the detriment of local Sandy Point businesses. Visitors love our environment but vow never to return because they cannot obtain mobile phone or internet connections.

Solution?

A communications tower appropriately located nearby could service not only Sandy Point but also other small communities in our immediate area, such as Waratah and Walkerville. There is a good business case for Telstra to be proactive in improving telecommunications to our area, both in support of the distressed local residents as well as new business opportunities for baby-boomers who are now sea-change arrivals, visitors and businesses.

Conclusion:

This letter is a plea to your Government from the Sandy Point community to listen to our case and to bring vital improvements to our communications.

Yours sincerely

Dr Neil Shaw

President, Sandy Point Community Group
