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:	Amanda Riches
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Date:	28 March 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.

28 February 2014

File Ref: TEL-TOW
Your Ref:

The Manager
Department of Communications.
PO Box 2154
CANBERRA   ACT   2615

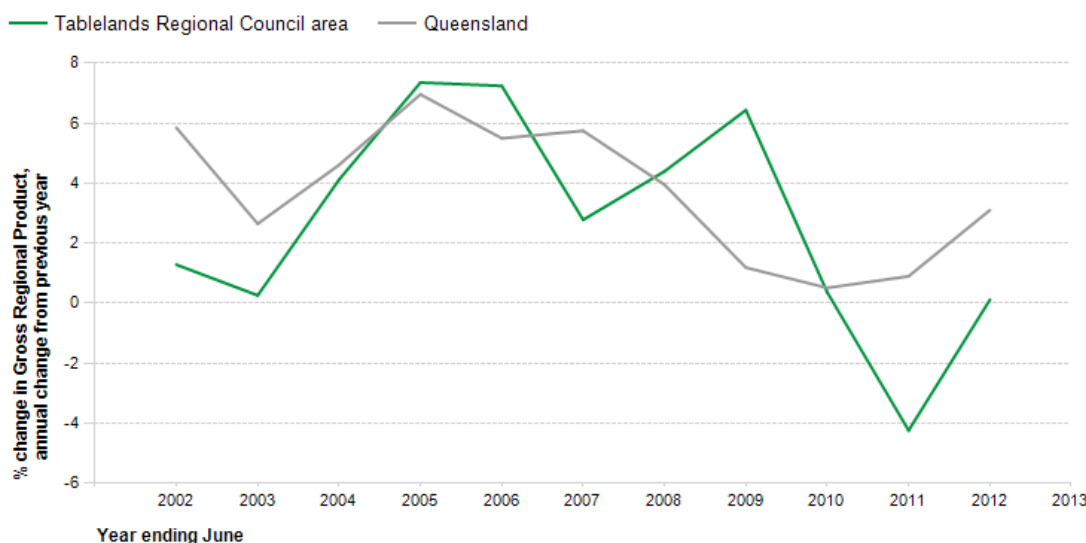**RE: MOBILE PHONE BLACK SPOT AREAS WITHIN THE TABLELANDS REGIONAL COUNCIL**

I refer to your request for information relating to your Mobile Coverage Programme. Coverage across the Atherton Tablelands is sporadic at best and generally restricted to urban centres.

The Gross Regional Product (GRP) for the Tablelands as of 30 June 2012 was $1.9bn, of this Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing generated $710m (representing 37.4% of the total). This sector produces 14% of citrus fruit, 14% of milk and 11.5% of nuts for Queensland. Agriculture is, therefore, not only an important industry for the Tablelands but for Queensland as a whole. Agriculture is also the largest employer in the region with 3,788 jobs in 2011/2012.

The Tablelands has a varied climate, rich agricultural soils and plentiful irrigation water, which makes it a primary target for infrastructure investment to help meet the Coalition's target of developing a food bowl, including premium produce, which could help to double Australia's agricultural output.

Reliable communications technology is required now to ensure that the industry can exploit the many new opportunities offered across the full value chain from crop cultivation through harvesting, product handling and packaging, quality management and marketing. Unfortunately, Infrastructure on the Tablelands is sporadic at best and, particularly away from town centers, is simply not available. Consequently growth rates in the agricultural industry on the Tablelands are now falling significantly behind those across Queensland as a whole with a consequential impact on employment.

Council recently conducted a survey on communications coverage across the region; key results from this show that:
- 22% of respondents have no mobile telephone coverage at all;
- of those that do have access 46% have 2 bars of reception or lower; and
- 23.2% of respondents, who have access to a mobile network, experience 50% or more calls dropping out each day.

Please find listed below some of the areas that have been identified through consultation with constituents, personal knowledge as well as information gained through Council our community survey.

Mobile Phone Blackspot Areas

- Southern end of Marnane Road, Tolga down to the 'Igloo' area at Rocky Creek.
- Innot Hot Springs
- Wondecla
- Watsonville
- Irvinebank
- Gillies Range - from the top of the Tablelands into Malanda
- Topaz - Some areas of Butchers Creek and many spots between Malanda and Atherton, Malanda and Millaa Millaa
- Tarzali - Pockets of no or limited coverage in the town of Tarzali - eg coverage deteriorates rapidly down Sheehan Road Tarzali to no coverage at the end (the valley end)
- Ravenshoe   12081 Kennedy Hwy, aka Chilverton / Evelyn /Ravenshoe.
  South west of Ravenshoe, around Marshall Park on Wooroora Road.

Other Telecommunications Issue

The town of Ravenshoe identified the need for improved telecommunications and for Telstra to install a back up generator at the Telstra tower to improve mobile phone service, Internet, TV and radio services and UHF reception for handheld radios by emergency services.

A check on the three major telecommunications industry's websites, Telstra, Optus and Vodafone indicates there are numerous blackspot areas throughout the region, however, the results are dependent on the customer's type of handset - e.g. 3G, 4G, etc.
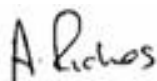
The maps for these Telco's can be found at:

http://www.telstra.com.au/mobile-phones/coverage-networks/our-coverage/

https://www.optus.com.au/network/mobile/coverage?display=&network=

http://www.vodafone.com.au/aboutvodafone/network/checker?lid=v:pers:samsung-galaxy-s-iii-4g:vodafone-4g:text:coverage-checker

Regards

A. Riches

Amanda Riches
Senior Advisor Economic Development