

## **Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper**

### **Submission Cover Sheet**

<b>Submission Information</b>	
<b>This cover sheet should be attached to submissions made to the Department of Communications in relation to the Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper.</b>	
<b>Contact Details</b>	
<b>Name of respondent:</b>	
<b>Name of organisation:</b>	Yallingup Rural Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade
<b>Phone:</b>	
<b>Email:</b>	
<b>Website (if applicable):</b>	<a href="http://yrvbfb.wordpress.com/">http://yrvbfb.wordpress.com/</a>
<b>Date:</b>	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? **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 **HYPERLINK "mailto:mobilecoverage@communications.gov.au" [mobilecoverage@communications.gov.au](mailto:mobilecoverage@communications.gov.au)**

To: The Manager, Mobile Coverage Programme, Department of Communications

From: [REDACTED]  
Yallingup Rural Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade

Subject: Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper.

February 24, 2014

### **Summary:**

We represent a bush fire brigade operating in an area of high to extreme bush fire risk with a very large seasonal population served by poor mobile phone coverage. Enhanced mobile coverage would allow for faster notification of fires, faster response to fires and a more efficient handling of the fire. To date we have been very fortunate in not losing anyone to bush fires, but it is not an exaggeration to say that improved mobile coverage will help us save lives. We would therefore request that our area receives a high rating when assessing priorities for improving mobile coverage.

### **The Submission:**

The Yallingup Rural Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade serves an area of roughly 106 square kilometres in one of Australia's iconic tourist destinations. Consequently, we have a very large seasonal population. This includes both visitors and holiday home owners. In summer, the area is probably one of the most densely populated areas in high and extreme fire risk zones (see map1). Our region includes 13 km of Caves Road, one of the busiest (and accident-prone) tourist routes in the state. It also includes a length of national park and part of the renowned Cape to Cape Track.

Our area also includes a lengthy stretch of the Leeuwin-Naturaliste Ridge and consequently, due to the hilly terrain, mobile phone coverage is quite poor. This creates a range of problems such as:

### **Fire Notification**

We rely on the public to call in fires from their mobile phones. With a large area of our region out of coverage, this can delay calling in the fire. In theory, if you can get to a fire within 15 minutes of its start, you have a good chance of putting it out immediately. Any delay in making the 000 call makes this goal impossible.

### **Fire Response**

Once a 000 call has been made, an SMS text message is sent out by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) Comms Centre to Brigade members advising the need to respond and location of the fire. Roughly half our members have poor or no mobile service at home. Those working rurally as tradesmen have an even smaller chance of coverage. We have a significant number of members who work in agriculture and they generally have very poor coverage, so they will also miss the initial report.

The next step is for our coordinator to send an SMS text message to all members to ascertain who can respond to call out the crew to the trucks, and this is also done by SMS text message. Again, around half the brigade could miss this call. This means that the onus falls on a limited number of members who have mobile coverage. If they happen to be on holiday or out of coverage, it means smaller crews and/or longer delays in finding available members.

## **Brigade Effectiveness**

There are a rapidly expanding number of tools available as mobile apps and online resources that could make our Brigade more effective if they could be accessed either enroute or at the fire. These include expanded mapping capabilities, weather forecasting, reference material and communications. From time to time our trucks are out of radio range and having mobile phone coverage as a backup could be extremely useful and , potentially, life saving.

## **Other Factors:**

As a coastal brigade we are impacted by major storms, especially in winter. This can, at times, knock out the landline phone system for days. With neither landline nor mobile communications, we have a hard time functioning.

We have one school in our district (without mobile coverage) and the rest of the students are served by school busses. They need to be contactable when roads are closed due to fire, and to report medical and other emergencies.

We have a number of tourist attractions (caves, cliffs and the Cape to Cape Track) used for groups including school groups which need to be contactable in case of fire in the area, and for medical emergencies or when lost. Similarly, we have a number of beaches with no coverage

There are an increasing number of sporting events like mountain biking and iron man championships being held in the areas with no mobile coverage. There are also a large number of wineries, restaurants and resorts in the area. When the landlines go down through storm or fire, they are difficult to contact should evacuation be necessary as many have no mobile coverage.

As to your specific questions:

1. As a minimum we require 3G with mobile voice and data broadband services.
- 3-8. Monopoly/multiple MNOs. Our members are currently using two of the three networks, but we have tourists and holiday residents on all three networks, so our preference is for all networks to be made available. As the NBN is in the process of installing wireless wifi towers in part of the district, it would seem to make sense to encourage them all to share facilities and costs, hopefully allowing wider coverage.
18. By sharing towers, the NBN could help spread the cost of expanding mobile coverage. Integrating an emergency SMS Text messaging facility into the network could also be useful, but that appears to be beyond the scope of this project.

Map 1

Map of Yallingup Rural District (Yellow border)  
Fire hazard area in brown, known poor/no mobile coverage in red

