

PREMIER
MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT

Mr Christopher Pyne MP
Chair
House of Representatives Communications, Information Technology & the
Arts Committee
R1, Suite 116
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Pyne

I am writing in relation to your letter of 15 April 2002 informing the Tasmanian Government of your Committee's inquiry into the current and potential use of wireless technologies.

Our primary concern in Tasmania is the delivery of advanced telecommunication services to all regions, rather than the use of a particular technology. Focusing on a particular technology, as opposed to the service problems, may actually preclude innovative solutions.

Wireless technology, including wireless local loops or last mile broadband solutions, may in some cases be the best option for:

- meeting the needs of mobile workers;
- serving those regional and rural areas that do not have the population density to justify the installation of fibre; and
- facilitating new telecommunication entrants by reducing the costs to install new and competing infrastructure.

The Tasmanian Government believes these niche opportunities should not be allowed to distract us from the challenge of ensuring the delivery of quality broadband solutions to all regions of Australia, by whatever technology is the most appropriate.

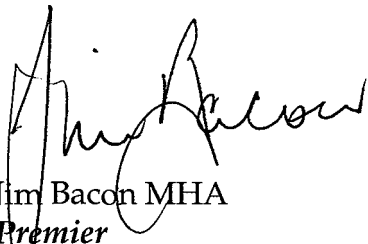
However, while the Tasmanian Government would advocate a technology neutral approach to telecommunications regulation and industry development, there is one area of Commonwealth influence which inevitably impacts on the use and usefulness of wireless technologies. This is in the area of managing spectrum.

The Tasmanian Government is of the view that your inquiry should address spectrum management. For example, the Commonwealth Government's new policy of contestability in the provision of the Universal Service Obligation will depend, in part, on the options available to new entrants which, in turn, will depend on the availability of spectrum. The current policy of treating some spectrum useful for telecommunication services essentially as a corporate asset has the potential to provide competitive advantage to the licence owners, even where they have no intention to utilise the licences for the provision of services. This is in contrast to the apparatus licence approach to managing spectrum for the provision of radio and TV services.

Lastly, I note the overlap between your inquiry and the current Productivity Commission Radiocommunications Review, including the already released draft report. Many of the draft recommendations appear to cover issues also likely to be covered by your inquiry. As the terms of reference of the inquiries differ, it would be beneficial if a consistent approach was adopted so that the two inquiries complement each other.

Thank you for providing the Tasmanian Government with the opportunity to provide a submission to your Committee's inquiry.

Yours sincerely



Jim Bacon MHA
Premier