



The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS



Dr Dennis Jensen MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
PO Box 6021
CANBERRA ACT 2600

26 MAY 2014

Petitions, 849/1317, 839/1306 and 762/1214 - Mobile coverage at Wilcannia, Normanton and Karumba, and Lake Tyers Beach

Dear Dr ~~Jensen~~

Thank you for your letters dated 2 January and 31 January 2014 concerning petitions submitted to the Standing Committee on Petitions, regarding poor mobile phone coverage at Wilcannia (849/1317) and in the Normanton/Karumba region (839/1306).

I am also taking the opportunity to respond to a letter dated 15 May 2013 from the Hon. John Murphy MP, Chair of the previous Standing Committee on Petitions, concerning a petition that was lodged about mobile phone coverage at Lake Tyers Beach (762/1214).

The Australian Government recognises the importance of reliable mobile coverage to Australians. While mobile phone carriers claim to provide coverage to 99 per cent of Australia's population, there are still some areas that have no coverage, particularly in regional and remote locations.

Expanding mobile coverage has clear economic and social benefits, as well as public safety benefits for people living, working and travelling in regional and remote areas.

The Government is investing \$100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in some outer metropolitan, regional and remote communities which do not currently have reliable coverage. The Government's \$100 million investment is expected to generate at least matching funding from local and state governments, communities and industry.

The Mobile Black Spot Programme will improve coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as well as addressing unique mobile coverage problems.

Further information on the Mobile Black Spot Programme is available on the Department of Communications' website www.communications.gov.au/mobile_coverage

I am pleased to advise that Wilcannia, the Normanton/Karumba region and Lake Tyers Beach are all areas that will be eligible for the programme. The information provided about mobile coverage in these areas has been added to the database we are building of areas reported to have poor coverage. This database will be shared with the mobile carriers and other interested players to assist them in preparing their proposals under this programme.

To ensure that these communities are aware of the opportunities presented by the Mobile Black Spot Programme I have tasked my Department to contact the petition organisers from all three areas and provide any assistance that is necessary.

Thank you from bringing these petitions to my attention and I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Malcolm Turnbull