

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates May 2017

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 34

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Written, 02/06/2017

Topic: Mobile Black Spot Program

Senator Griff, Stirling asked:

Round 2 of the Mobile Black Spot Program provided \$60 million. The successful applications were announced in December last year. Mayo only had two successful bids at Stokes Bay and Parawa. Whilst Mayo received two, the electorate of Grey received 13, and the electorate of Barker was allocated five.

1. Was there additional criteria specific to Round 2 beyond what is publicly available on the Department's website?
 - (a) If so, what is that criteria?
 - (b) If not, why was it that there was such a disparity between the numbers of Black Spots funded in Mayo compared to neighbouring regional electorates?
2. When is Round 3 being announced? Will there be additional criteria specific to Round 3 beyond what is publicly available on the Department's website?
 - (a) If so, what is that criteria?
 - (b) Will the black spot identified at Ashbourne be funded in Round 3?
3. What quantum of funding will be allocated for further rounds of the Mobile Black Spot Program? How is that funding calculated? How many further rounds will there be?
4. Will the Government be extending the Mobile Black Spot Program so that all priority sites are funded? If not, why not?

Answer:

1. No, the assessment processes and selection criteria for rounds 1 and 2 of the Mobile Black Spot Program are set out in the Program Guidelines published on the Department of Communications and the Arts' website at www.communications.gov.au/mobile_coverage.
 - (a) See (1) above.
 - (b) Round 2 of the program required carriers to put forward proposals to address locations identified on the database of reported black spots by the public. All proposals were assessed against the selection criteria as described in the published guidelines. Under this process, two round 2 proposed base stations in Mayo were assessed as offering value to the program and funded in accordance with the published guidelines.
2. The locations for the Priority Location round were announced by the Government in 2016, these are available on the Department's website. A competitive funding process will take place in 2017 to deliver on these commitments, subject to suitable applications being

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submitted by the mobile carriers. The selection criteria and assessment process will be detailed in the Program Guidelines for the Priority Locations round which will be published on the Department's website.

(a) See (2) above.

(b) Ashbourne is one of the 125 announced priority locations. A competitive process to deliver on this commitment will take place in 2017, subject to a suitable application being submitted by the mobile carriers.

3. There are currently no additional funding rounds for the Program. The mobile carriers are rolling out 765 towers, with the Government priority locations rollout to come.
4. See response to question three.