



## The Hon Michelle Rowland MP

**Minister for Communications  
Federal Member for Greenway**

MS23-003499

Ms Kelly Bayer Rosmarin  
Chief Executive Officer  
Optus  
1 Lyonpark Road  
MACQUARIE PARK NSW 2113

Dear Ms Bayer Rosmarin

The Australian Government is committed to ongoing investment in improving regional telecommunications services across Australia and recognises the important role telecommunications companies, such as Optus, contribute to achieving this outcome.

As you are aware, the Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia (the Plan) is a key part of the Government's \$2.2 billion commitment to improving mobile and broadband connectivity in regional, rural and remote parts of the country. The Plan includes \$400 million dedicated to boosting mobile coverage and resilience and \$200 million towards further rounds of the Regional Connectivity Program (RCP). The Government opened the RCP Round 3 (with Mobile Black Spot (Round 7) opportunities) on 20 March 2023 and is calling for applications from the industry. I encourage Optus to work with the states, territories, local governments and communities to put forward proposals under this grant opportunity. Applications close on 12 July 2023.

In June 2022, I agreed to a request from Optus to an extension of time (EOT) for up to <sup>s47G</sup> Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) Rounds 2-5 base stations experiencing delays. <sup>s47G</sup>  
<sup>s47G(1)(a)</sup>

I acknowledge Optus' support and contribution to date to the MBSP, particularly under the challenging circumstances over the past 12 months with severe weather events, natural disasters and supply chain disruptions. However, it remains a priority for the Government that mobile base stations funded under existing rounds of the MBSP are delivered over the next 12 months.

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PO Box 6022, Parliament House Canberra  
Suite 101C, 130 Main Street, Blacktown NSW 2148 | (02) 9671 4780

To facilitate this, I have agreed to a 12-month EOT for up to <sup>s47G(1)</sup> Optus base stations funded under Rounds 2 to 5A of the MBSP (at Attachment A), which have experienced delays and are not expected to be completed by 30 June 2023.

I understand that building mobile infrastructure in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia can be complex and challenging, whereby factors such as obtaining landowner agreement, state and territory planning approvals, and receiving support from parks and power authorities is typically outside Optus' direct control.

I seek your support in ensuring that Optus directs sufficient attention and resources to the MBSP so that these delayed base stations are delivered over the course of the next 12 months. I also ask that Optus report back to the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (my department) by 31 January 2024 with an update on the rollout status for these EOT sites, including a clear statement on the expected completion date for any uncompleted sites, and Optus' plans for sites that are forecast to experience further delays or likely to be frustrated. The contact at my department is <sup>s22(1)(a)</sup> <sup>s22(1)(a)</sup> Director, Mobile Programs Implementation at <sup>s22(1)(a)</sup> [@infrastructure.gov.au](mailto: @infrastructure.gov.au).<sup>(ii)</sup>

For any sites not completed by 31 January 2024, I would expect them to have at least achieved Acquisition, Access and Approval (AAA) status by that time, or Optus be able to clearly demonstrate that AAA status can be achieved in a timeframe that would allow for any outstanding sites to be completed by 30 June 2024. I'm unlikely to consider favourably any further EOT requests beyond June 2024 for sites that do not have a clear pathway forward to completion.

Improving digital connectivity is a high priority for the Government and I look forward to working closely with Optus to continue to provide people living, working and travelling in regional, rural and remote Australia with better access to more reliable and affordable telecommunications services

Yours sincerely




Michelle Rowland MP

22/6/2023

Enc

cc <sup>s47F</sup> Vice President, Regulatory and Public Affairs

s47G(1)(a)



s47G(1)(a)

