

Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper

Submission Cover Sheet

Submission Information

This cover sheet should be attached to submissions made to the Department of Communications in relation to the Mobile Coverage Programme Discussion Paper.

Contact Details

Name of respondent: [REDACTED]

Name of organisation: Centroc

Phone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Website (if applicable): www.centroc.com.au

Date: 28 February 2014

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 mobilecoverage@communications.gov.au

Alternatively, submissions can be sent to the postal address below (to arrive by the due date):

The Manager
Mobile Coverage Programme
Department of Communications
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2615

All submissions lodged will be acknowledged by the Department of Communications by email (or by letter if no email is provided). Respondents lodging a submission who do not receive acknowledgement of their submission should contact the Department. Submissions which are not acknowledged by the Department as being received may not be considered. Respondents should be aware that emails greater than 10Mb may not be successfully delivered.

Mobile Coverage Program

Discussion Paper

SUBMISSION

February 2014



CENTRAL NSW
COUNCILS



CENTRAL NSW
COUNCILS

Centroc's Mission is to be recognised as the lead organisation advocating on agreed regional positions and priorities for Central NSW whilst providing a forum for facilitating regional co-operation and sharing of knowledge, expertise and resources; effectively nurturing sustainable investment and infrastructure development.

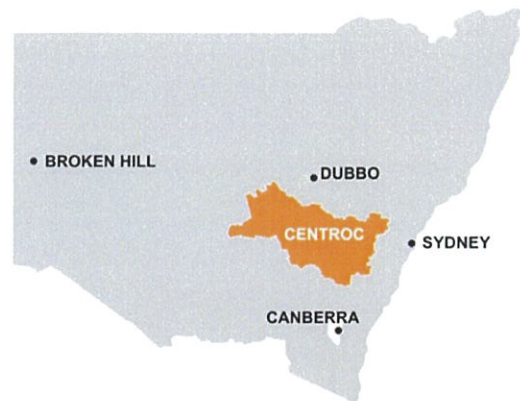
www.centroc.com.au

28 February 2014

The Manager
Mobile Coverage Program
Department of Communications
GPO Box 2154
CANBERRA ACT 2615

Re: Mobile Coverage Program Discussion Paper

Centroc is a large and long standing voluntary association of councils of varying sizes ranging from populations of around 2500 to populations of close to 40,000. It has received national recognition for its work in delivering measurable benefits to the members it serves. This recognition includes commentary and awards at the State and National levels for example the Productivity Commission and most recently the Minister for Local Government for NSW, The Hon Don Page. Most importantly, it is valued by its members.



Central NSW Councils (Centroc) comprises the Local Government Areas of Bathurst, Blayney, Boorowa, Cabonne, Cowra, Forbes, Lachlan, Lithgow, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Upper Lachlan, Weddin, Young and Central Tablelands Water.

It has two objectives, one around advocacy and the other around supporting members operations.

The Centroc Board is made up of the 30 Mayors, elected representatives and General Managers of its member Councils who determine priority for the region. These priorities are then progressed via sponsoring Councils.

For more advice on Centroc programming and priorities, please go to our website at www.centroc.com.au/publications

Centroc understands that the funding has two elements:

1. the \$80 million Mobile Network Expansion Project will improve mobile coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in areas that are prone to experiencing natural disasters; and
2. the \$20 million Mobile Black Spot Project will improve mobile coverage in locations with unique coverage problems such as areas with high demand for services.

As a regional area which has undertaken significant work in identifying the needs for broadband and mobile coverage in Central NSW, we make the following points with regard to the questions asked.

Overall, it is noted that the mobile network is often the way that regional businesses access broadband. While expensive, it is hoped that Federal support in this area will help both grow the business case for service providers looking for a profit and extend and improve existing services. Having said that, terrestrial broadband service delivered through fibre optic cable that are scalable and affordable offer better future proofing and the region remains committed to ensuring the best possible infrastructure for our businesses, students and citizens.

It is noted that the questions asked are around the best ways to procure a mobile blackspot program where advice regarding where it would roll out will form another round of stakeholder engagement. In the first instance further work around cost benefit is recommended where the more complex arrangements may require significant administration. It is assumed feedback from this submission process will help inform more in depth work.

Further iterations after locations have been identified may also affect procurement option choices. It may be that differing incentivisation is required for more remote locations and this would need to be factored in. At a practical level there are locations in this region that need coverage and also would provide a commercial return to carriers who make an investment.

For example, in Parkes, where broadband recently reached capacity:

- the eastern side of Parkes where the a housing estate has been developed, the coverage is very poor due to "shadowing" from the major tower;
- the airport has good coverage but as moving back toward the town it falls off;
- the Newell between Parkes and Dubbo (at about Peak Hill) has a sizeable black spot;
- the road between Parkes and Orange passes through a forest and that has no coverage. This is a busy section of road and is prone to accidents due to wildlife crossing.

Another example is Cowra where the coverage in the main street is patchy and should be serviced by "micro cells." Between Cowra and Bathurst there are several black spots which should be addressed based on the traffic volumes.

Please find attached advice from Bathurst regarding the need for improvement and the "patchiness" of existing service.

On the back of delivering services where they may not be as profitable as in more population dense area, this region is serviced mostly by Telstra though other providers are offering a growing footprint. It is also noted that there is significant infrastructure suitable for mobile telephony being rolled out in the region, both actual and anticipated under NBN. The region is therefore supporting of proposals that look to co-fund and build both infrastructure and relationships between service providers.

While the region is supportive of sharing infrastructure, minimising duplication and maximising competitiveness, it makes the following commentary regarding the three options for procuring the mobile service expansion:

- Feasibility would need to be undertaken regarding Option 1 as to the time frames that “competitors” would make use of open access arrangements.
- Options 2 and 3 are more complex would require consistency of program management.
- While supporting of proposals that look to co-fund and build both infrastructure and relationships between service providers historically, negotiations between telephony and broadband service providers have been tortuous and this should be factored in.

The balance between better service and more immediate service to regional Australia is challenging, and Centroc members appreciate the Herculean task being taken on by the Government.

Please find attached detailed responses from the following members, Bathurst, Boorowa and Upper Lachlan.

Once again, thank you for providing this opportunity to give thought to this issue. For further advice in regards to this submission please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Cr Ken Keith

Chair

Central NSW Councils (Centroc)

Bathurst Regional Council Response to Mobile Coverage Program Discussion Paper

Boorowa Council Response to Mobile Coverage Program Discussion Paper

Upper Lachlan Response to Mobile Coverage Program Discussion Paper