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:	Ben & Lara Hawke
Name of organisation:	BL & LM Hawke
Phone:	[redacted]
Email:	[redacted]
Website (if applicable):	NA
Date:	27-2-14

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? **Yes** ☐ **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.

Submission to the Mobile Coverage Programme

Written by Ben and Lara Hawke

BG and LM Hawke

[redacted]

[redacted]

Introduction

Agriculture is one of the largest contributors to the creation of wealth in Australia. As our secondary industry continues to struggle against those countries with significantly lower labour and input costs, Australia is rapidly increasing its reliance on Mining and Agriculture to provide the wealth creation that will be the basis of our economic strength into the future. Both industries are up to the task. However, the extreme lack of investment in public infrastructure in the areas where Mining and, more particularly, Agriculture occurs over the last fifty years has meant a continual reduction in our efficiency and competitiveness over that period. Telecommunications is one of those key areas where lack of investment has been greatest.

The rate of advancement in telecommunication technology has been matched by its adoption by the Agricultural Industry. This is particularly the case in mobile telecommunications. The ability to carry both voice and data on a mobile platform is about to revolutionise how Agriculture carries out business. It will have the ability to vastly improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the Agricultural Industry which will result in hundreds of millions of dollars in additional wealth created over the coming years. However, that will only occur with mobile coverage over the entire of rural Australia. The Agricultural sector understands the prohibitive expense in providing handheld coverage over the entire of rural Australia. However, as the use of carkit and external aerial technology is widely adopted in these areas, the industry sees that it is a sound investment that coverage be provided to all rural Australia using these technologies. It must also be remembered that a large number of rural landline communications (landline phone, fax and internet services) are run through the Next G Network via the Next G Wireless Loop. A potentially great service that is plagued by poor coverage and even worse maintenance resulting in it being inoperable for large periods of time.

We believe the $100 million commitment will be spread too thinly to see any real improvements in efficiency and competitiveness in the Agricultural Industry. $30 billion has been committed to provide a highly advanced telecommunication service to predominantly a demographic that already has an effective and efficient telecommunication system, both fixed and mobile. It is without doubt that the NBN will provide a world leading service with substantial economic and social benefits to both metropolitan and regional areas. However, the immediate return on investment to the wealth of the nation from a complete mobile coverage of Agricultural producing areas compared to that of the NBN, we believe, necessitates a far greater investment now, even if economic factors require

that elements of the NBN rollout be postponed until a later date.Having said all this, we welcome the Mobile Coverage Programme and appreciate being able to contribute to it. This submission will have a local focus on the area where our business is predominately carried out, even though we believe strongly that a nationwide focus is needed. We hope and look forward to be a part of the Programme as it develops and rolls out.

Mobile Coverage

Attachments MOBILE COVERAGE 2003 AND 2004 are a Telstra coverage map for the Come-By-Chance/ Hollywood area. This is located between Walgett, Coonamble and Pilliga in the North-west Slopes and Plains of NSW. It includes parts of the Walgett and Coonamble Shires. The dark grey shaded areas represent where handheld coverage can be obtained. The light grey shaded areas represent where coverage can be obtained using a carkit and external aerial. The white areas represent where there is no coverage. Although the handheld areas may be reasonably indicative, the representation of coverage using a carkit and external antennas is highly inaccurate. In fact a large part of that area receives no coverage at all.

It appears, through correspondence with Telstra over a range of issues, that this coverage will in fact shrink as our use of smart phones increases. The following section of an email illustrates this (please note that this [redacted] did not realise we already use carkits and Smart Antennas at the time of this correspondence);

"Comparisons with what may have been possible using CDMA or analogue are pointless given both technologies have been superseded world-wide. The 'shrinking coverage' issues we face have nothing do with the type of technology, but rather the growing demand on the network and the use of smart phones. It is for this reason that car kits and Smart Antennas for inside the home are absolutely essential. This 'shrinking coverage' issue is not unique to country areas, we are even recommending these in some instances in Metropolitan areas.

Kind Regards

[redacted] Area General Manager
TCW North West NSW | Telstra Consumer & Country Wide
[redacted] | W www.telstra.com/countrywide"

Given this, it can be expected that the patchy and inconsistent coverage we receive with our carkits and external antennas will only get worse to the point of being non-existent.

Next G Wireless Link

A large number of rural and remote homes and businesses run off the Next G Wireless Link. This setup involves the 'landline' phone, fax and internet being carried through the Next G network via a transmission box installed in the home or office and a Yagi aerial to transmit and receive to the closest Next G tower. Homes or businesses that are on the limits of the towers range will often have a booster tower erected near their structure to improve service.

Although the concept is fantastic, in practice it has been seriously flawed. There are numerous outages, whether it be the phone, fax or intenet or a combination of them at the same time. Outages have lasted from hours to weeks, with some outages occurring during massive floods and, more recently, during the extreme bushfire period during the early part of 2013. The fax service has not successfully worked since its inception and we are still working with Telstra to find out why. This has included a large amount of our time, that should be used in the management of our business, not Telstras, not to mention the purchase of a third fax machine as we go through a process of elimination of fax brands.

It must be understood that, for many, this is their only telecommunication as they can receive no mobile service. In addition, the Berkley Downs Tower which services the Wireless Link in this area has had numerous and regular outages, during floods, bushfires and periods of wintercrop harvest and cotton picking, rendering the entire district with no communication whatsoever. During the last outage alone, early last year, one elderly lady had a stroke and another young girl had a motorbike accident, fortunately neither fatal, but their sourcing of medical help was difficult and prolonged.

For a large period since its inception Telstra has been extremely slow to respond to issues, both at a domestic level and in the repairs to the tower. It has only been through substantial community outrage and the involvement of our local member that some improvement was experienced for a short period of time. In the end, the community received a verbal commitment that repairs to the Berkley Downs tower would be faster than previous events, but improvement to the service at a domestic level has not changed. We have had substantial correspondence with the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO), with our most recent response below;

"You have indicated that you wish to continue receiving the NGWL services as there are no alternative options. As discussed previously, this unfortunately means you will have to accept the services as they are - with the current service difficulties.

[redacted] | Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman
[redacted]"

Although it is not in the brief of the Mobile Coverage Programme to improve the performance of these Wireless Link services, it does give weight to the necessity for greater mobile coverage in the area.

Agricultural Business In the Come-By-Chance/Hollywood Area

The predominant Agricultural enterprises carried out in this area are winter cropping, beef cattle, wool, lamb and mutton production, cotton, cattle and sheep stud breeding, as well as other smaller enterprises. There are around 400 000 hectares of agricultural land in the area, at a value of approximately $1200/ha giving a total asset value of $500 million, with a turnover of $250 million per year in an average year. It includes the small communities of Hollywood, Come-By-Chance, Billeroy, Wingadee and Warrington. This area is touched by edge of the coverage from the Walgett, Coonamble, Berkley Downs and Castlereagh towers, with only intermittent to no service received via a carkit and external antenna.

Submission Proposal

We propose that the Mobile Coverage Programme includes the construction of a new tower at Hollywood (marked "H" on attachments MOBILE COVERAGE 2003 AND 2004) and the upgrade of the Warrington tower (marked "W" on the same attachments).

HOLLYWOOD: This locality already has an exchange and power that would make it logistically simple to construct a new tower. It is easily accessible to Coonamble for servicing and maintenance.

WARRINGTON: This is located on the Castlereagh Highway between Walgett and Coonamble. There is already a tower located there, and only needs upgrading to carry the Next G technology.

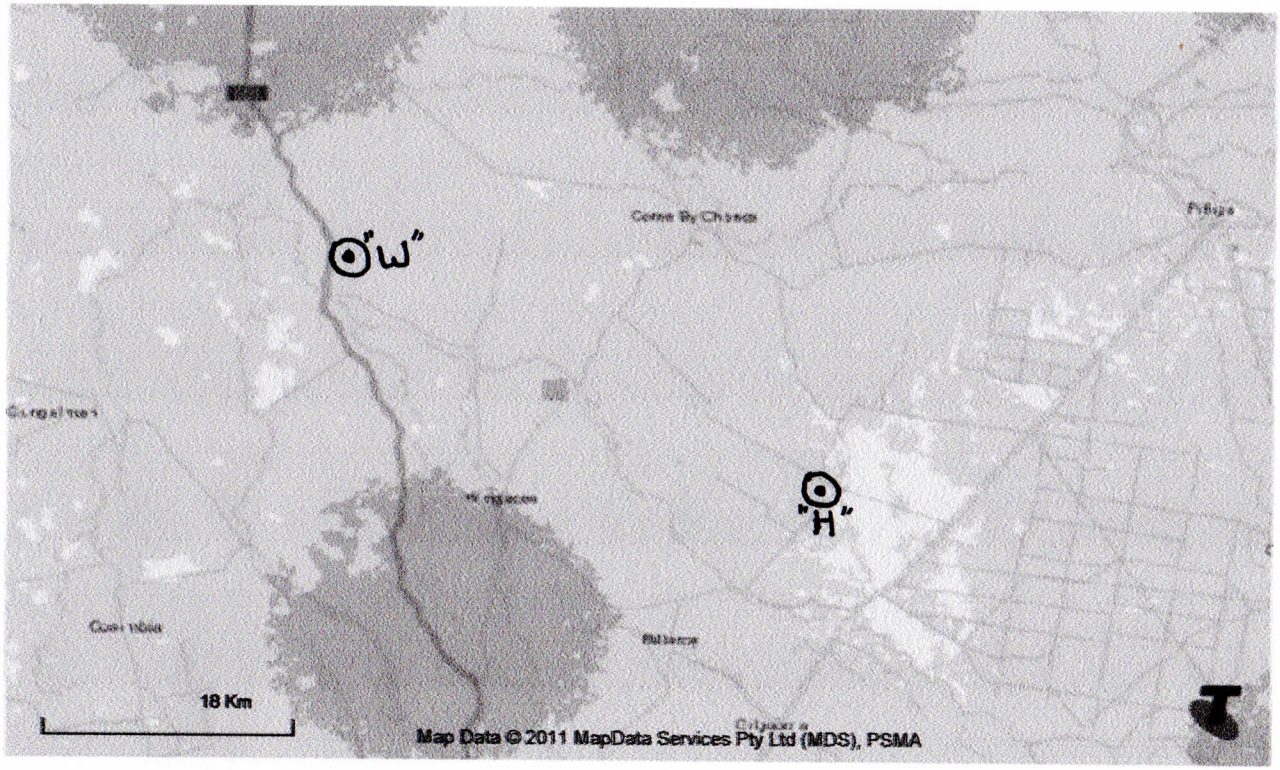
These two towers would completely fill the mobile coverage void that is being experienced in this productive region. In addition, the Warrington tower will fill the blackspot on the Castlereagh Highway between Walgett and Coonamble. The Hollywood tower will fill the blackspot on the Pilliga Road between Coonamble and Pilliga (a main alternative truck route to the Newell Hwy).

There will be the opportunity for the Next G Wireless Link services in the area to read off these towers and take the pressure of the Berkley Downs tower which could significantly improve their performance.

Delivery Option

We believe Delivery option 3 would be the most effective way to achieve the mobile coverage, not only in our own circumstance, but right across rural Australia. Not only from the pros as outlined in the discussion paper, but for a large proportion of the areas being covered under this programme, they are most likely going to be provided coverage by only one MNO, which will most likely be the one constructing the infrastructure. This will result, hopefully, in a more comprehensive repair and maintenance programme in the future.

Come by Chance, NSW Lat/Long: -30.3609, 148.456



Voice

The coverage displayed is created using tools that predict the likely areas of coverage. While the coverage identified is generally accurate, there will be areas described as being within coverage areas where mobile devices will not work.

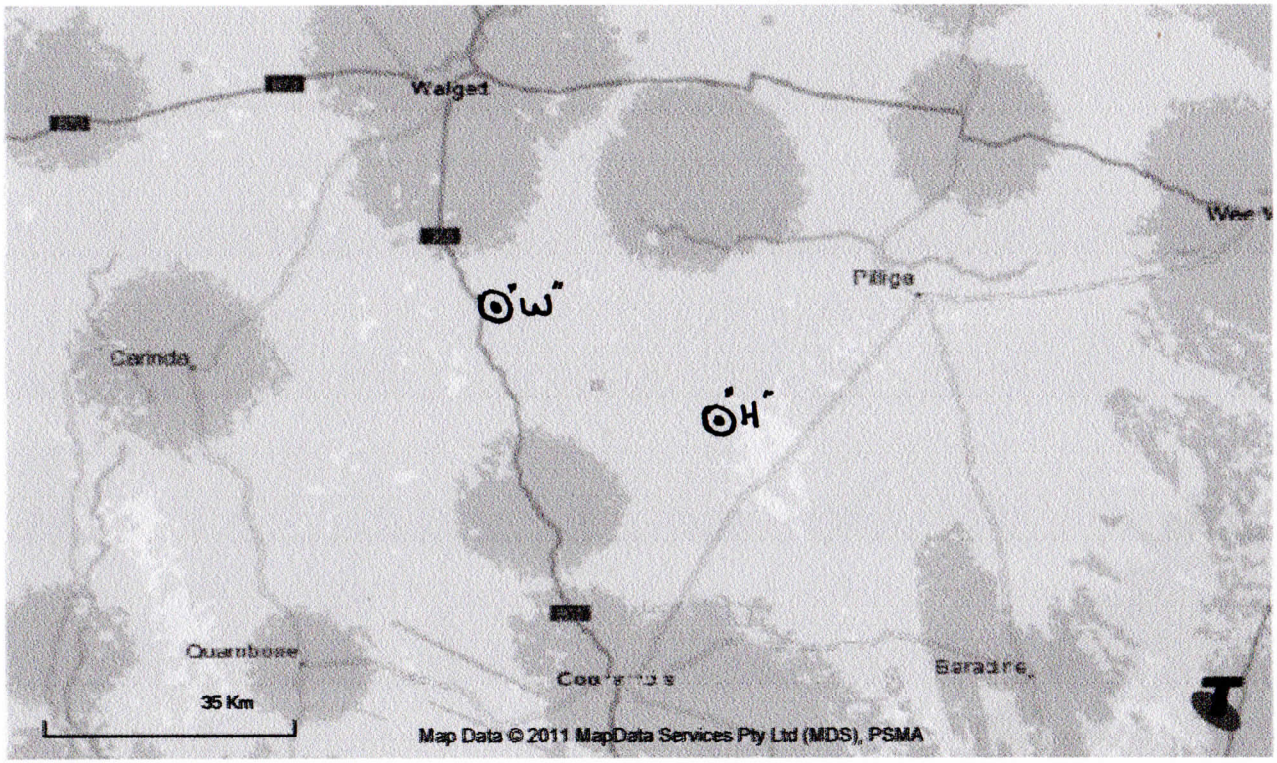
People with vision impairment may call Mobile Customer Service on 125 111 for verbal coverage advice.

Disclaimer

All mobile devices have been tested to operate within the coverage contours of the displayed coverage maps. Mobile device coverage depends on where you are, the device you are using and whether it has an external antenna attached. For tips on maximising your coverage, visit the Maximise Your Coverage page.

Customers should be aware that the Telstra mobile coverage maps displayed have been created using tools that predict the likely areas of coverage. Not every particular location within the identified coverage areas has been individually tested for coverage. This means that while the footprint of coverage outlined on the maps is generally accurate, there will be specific areas described as being within a coverage area where a customer's device will not work. This is a common characteristic of wireless systems. For example, coverage could be degraded or not existent in specific locations due to certain physical structures or geographic features or as a result of the device used. Physical structures which may block or inhibit coverage could include basements, lifts, underground car parks, concrete buildings, tunnels and road cuttings. Geographic features which may block or inhibit coverage could include formations such as hills and mountains or even trees.

Come by Chance, NSW Lat/Long: -30.3609, 148.456



Voice

The coverage displayed is created using tools that predict the likely areas of coverage. While the coverage identified is generally accurate, there will be areas described as being within coverage areas where mobile devices will not work.

People with vision impairment may call Mobile Customer Service on 125 111 for verbal coverage advice.

Disclaimer

All mobile devices have been tested to operate within the coverage contours of the displayed coverage maps. Mobile device coverage depends on where you are, the device you are using and whether it has an external antenna attached. For tips on maximising your coverage, visit the Maximise Your Coverage page.

Customers should be aware that the Telstra mobile coverage maps displayed have been created using tools that predict the likely areas of coverage. Not every particular location within the identified coverage areas has been individually tested for coverage. This means that while the footprint of coverage outlined on the maps is generally accurate, there will be specific areas described as being within a coverage area where a customer's device will not work. This is a common characteristic of wireless systems. For example, coverage could be degraded or not existent in specific locations due to certain physical structures or geographic