

## **SUBMISSION FOR ROUND 5A of the MOBILE BLACK SPOT PROGRAM**

I am a resident of the **Federal Seat of GREY**, held by Rowan Ramsey MP.

To give back ground information regarding the Mobile Black Spot that we have experienced for the past 10 years, I advise as follows:-

My husband Allan and I have farmed at **Ninnes, 8 klms south of Bute on the Yorke Peninsula** in South Australia for the past 44 years. The mobile reception for our Telstra mobile phones is very poor, it is unreliable and intermittent, causing much frustration when both running a business and for our personal phone calls.

We live in our **farm house located at [personal information removed] Ninnes**. For years we have had mobile drop outs on our phone calls, and regularly need to sit outside or walk out into the farm yard to ensure a better signal to speak or make a call back to someone who has rung us. This is very inconvenient when doing business (particularly in winter!) and business discussions out in the wind are hardly ideal. There I don't have access to my computer should I need to refer to information during a conversation.

For years, visitors to our area comment about the poor mobile phone coverage in our district. We have listened to many negative comments over the years. Truck drivers can't reach us when organising the transport of grain during harvest. We are constantly complained to about black spots where business people and other visitors can't make contact with us.

I recently upgraded my phone to the latest Samsung 5G phone, but alas, I still continue to have calls drop out after a few minutes, but do find the signal to initiate a call, much better than with my old phone. Calls still tend to drop out after 3-5 minutes, depending where I am standing in my kitchen when I answer the call!

### **Background:**

I personally have been lobbying for a good quality Telstra service in the Bute District for many years. As a Local Government member of the Barunga West Council from 2010-2018, I met with business people who constantly complained about the very poor unreliable signal in the Bute township and around the district. In 2011 I met with the Telstra Country wide Manager from Port Lincoln and business representatives. Nothing happened after years of lobbying, and eventually the main engineering business in Bute, Riteway Farming Australia moved out of the district and relocated at Wallaroo in frustration of our phone coverage at Bute.

I was involved in a personal presentation to Canberra during the 2015 National Local Government Conference at Parliament House, as we lobbied for our voice to be heard about the Mobile Black Spot Program, without success.

I have worked hard for years to have a **Telstra Tower located at Bute**. Whilst I held the position of Mayor in the Barunga West Council, a new tower, referred to as the Bute tower was built near Alford, and was opened by Rowan Ramsey. We were promised much improved mobile phone coverage at Bute, but unfortunately the new tower only extended coverage for a 15klm radius. Bute is well over 20 klms away, resulting in no improvement in the Bute township at all. I am **SO** frustrated as we at Council had offered land and every possible support towards the building of a tower within the Bute District, over a great number of years. We don't begrudge Alford residents the new tower, which Rowan Ramsey called the Bute Tower in conversations and Press Releases. The big problem is that the tower does not transmit to Bute at all. It does not have enough capacity.

Since then, I believe that a Small Cell 5G improvement has been made to the **Bute Exchange** by Telstra technicians, as reported in the "Yorke Peninsula Country Times" newspaper. Interesting. I still have to walk outside to take a phone call whilst working as a volunteer at the Bute History Group. This building is located right in the centre of High Street, Bute. I am very sceptical how effective this exchange upgrade has been.

We have an NBN tower in Bute, constructed in 2016/17, and many residents often ask why Telstra cannot make use of this existing infrastructure to add their mobile technology to it. I have been told this is not part of the policy of either NBN or Telstra to share towers. How short sighted this is!

We have been very patient residents since the introduction of digital mobile phones. The old CDMA phones had far better reliable coverage when mobiles were first introduced to our South Australian country areas many years ago. The advancement of technology in recent years has not benefited the Bute and Ninnes residents at all.

My sister lives nearby, at **[personal information removed]**, and she too has to make and receive phone calls from her verandah; although her home is only 2 klms north of the Bute township on the Snowtown Road. Her location near to Bute and closer to the Alford tower has not improved mobile phone signal one bit.

**Therefore, in an agricultural rich area of farming land in the Bute and Ninnes District, I urge the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Construction to consider building a tower on high ground at Ninnes, or in Bute. We need reliable coverage in a 360 degree radius along the Upper Yorke Road from Kulpara to Bute and beyond.**

**I strongly encourage your committee to listen to us and consider our plight to request that a Mobile Tower be constructed in the Bute District, during 'Round 5A of the Mobile Black Spot Program'.**

Yours sincerely

*Cynthia L Axford*  
For AH & CL AXFORD

[personal information removed]

NINNES SA 5560

Ph: [personal information removed]