

The Hon Michael McCormack MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development

Email: MBSPRound5@communications.gov.au

18 June 2020

Dear Minister,

Re: Consultation on design options for Round 5A of the Mobile Black Spot Program

Port Macquarie, and Sovereign Hills in particular, is one of the fastest growing areas in regional Australia. Notwithstanding this fact, investment in improvements to reception and telecommunication infrastructure is severely lacking - where it is needed most.

Who We Are

Sovereign Hills is a \$500million, 2,400 lot master planned community currently under development in the Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA. Located within Thrumster, the community is directly adjacent to the Pacific Highway, at the entry to Port Macquarie, in the Federal Electorate of Cowper.

Upon completion, one in every seven Port Macquarie residents will call Sovereign Hills "Home".

The masterplan includes:

- 2,400 residential lots, currently home to approx. 1,500 people, growing to over 8,000 people within the next 10 years
- 25,000sqm town centre – to be home to over 100 businesses and organisations
- St Joseph's Regional College – 1,200 students
- New school planned for additional 1,000 students
- 2 Childcare centres – catering for a total of 300 children
- New Regional Sporting Fields - catering for thousands of users

The Issue

The Port Macquarie-Hastings LGA is one of the fastest growing areas in regional Australia, with the population forecast to increase by 30% over the next 15 years. This has led to substantial investment, by both public and private sectors – recent upgrades including:

- Expansion of Port Base hospital
- Construction of new Port Macquarie regional airport
- Expansion of Charles Sturt University to include accommodation and grow to 5,000 students within 5 years

Investment in improvements to reception and telecommunication infrastructure however is severely lacking and is a consistent problem for not only the Sovereign Hills community, but for all Port Macquarie residents as well as the 1,500,000 visitors to the region each year.

With the ever-changing demands of technology and its increased role in day-to-day life, this problem is only expected to get worse – this has been shown to be particularly true during the recent COVID-19 pandemic, which will likely lead to an increase in migration from the larger cities to more regional places, like Port Macquarie.

Opportunities and Responses Specific to Round 5A of the MBSP

Round 5A of the MBSP has suggested dividing the available funding into three priority areas. We have addressed how Sovereign Hills, and Port Macquarie successfully meet all three below:

1. High priority natural disaster-prone areas including those affected or prone to bushfire

Being near large areas of forest and national parks creates an ongoing bushfire and natural disaster risk for Sovereign Hills. This was evidenced in late-2019 when the Port Macquarie region was devastated by bushfires. Improved telecommunications infrastructure is extremely important, not only to ensure the safety of residents, but to ensure emergency response units are able to effectively communicate and respond in times of need.

Specifically attached is a letter of support from the local Lake Innes Rural Fire Brigade.

2. New technology solutions in areas where low population densities have discouraged applications under earlier rounds

Council's Urban Growth Management Strategy forecasts that the suburb of Thrumster is will contribute much of the growth of Port Macquarie over the next 15 years. With this growth comes an increased demand on infrastructure that was previously not needed and thus not provided. Improved telecommunications capability through investment, which the MBSP can provide, would improve the liveability of the area.

3. Major regional and remote transport corridors

Sovereign Hills is located at the intersection of two major transport corridors - the Pacific Highway and the Oxley Highway. Reception on both main routes is well known for being unreliable, making communication whilst on the road near-impossible. This is particularly important as businesses operating between Sovereign Hills and Port Macquarie are impacted by this black spot as it affects effective and efficient telecommunications. This black spot also likely further discourages investment between these two centres because of this black spot, effectively creating a barrier between the two communities.

The Sovereign Hills community welcomes and thanks the Federal Government for their investment and support in regional Australia, and would like to see Sovereign Hills and Port Macquarie considered as a high priority area under Round 5A (and future rounds) of the Mobile Black Spot Program.

Sincerely,



Mike Long

Head of Development

michael.long@lewisland.com

Attachments:

- 1) *Letter of Support from MP for Port Macquarie, The Hon Lesley Williams*
- 2) *Letter of Support from Port Macquarie-Hastings Mayor, Peta Pinson*
- 3) *Letter of Support from Lake Innes Rural Fire Service Brigade*

Leslie Williams MP

MEMBER FOR PORT MACQUARIE ELECTORATE

18th June 2020

Mr Michael Long
Head of Development
Sovereign Hills
PO Box 392
Port Macquarie 2444

Dear Mr Long *Michael*

I write regarding submissions for Round 5a of the Federal Government's Mobile Black Spot Program.

I fully support Sovereign Hills and Port Macquarie to be strongly considered for Federal allocation of funding to provide greater mobile coverage and network choice within the Port Macquarie electorate.

Notably, Port Macquarie and Sovereign Hills meet the following requirements to be considered for funding:

- Port Macquarie is a high priority, natural disaster-prone area, recently devastated by bushfire.
- Sovereign Hills, and Port Macquarie generally, are located along the major transport corridors of the Pacific Highway and Oxley Highway.
- Previously low population density of Thrumster has meant that the area has been overlooked in previous rounds of funding.

Port Macquarie is an important, growing regional metropolitan centre. As a community, we actively encourage the expansion of new housing and business, welcome an annual influx of university students, and support the healthy and connected lifestyle of our residents and visitors. All of these segments require and expect a reliable mobile and internet service, which also underpins the creation of and support for local jobs.

- The Port Macquarie-Hastings region is expected to grow by 30% over the next 15 years.
Population growth is heading west, towards Thrumster, and Sovereign Hills is expected to contribute much of that growth – over 8,000 new residents in the next 15 years.
- The Sovereign Hills Town Centre is classified as a Major Business Development Zone within the Port Macquarie Hastings Council Urban Growth Management Plan, and is a strategic site is integral to the expansion of local and regional businesses.
- Port Macquarie is a tourist hotspot, attracting up to 1,500,000 visitors a year.

portmacquarie@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Suite 6, 27 Grant Street



Mobile phone reception within Sovereign Hills, Thrumster and Port Macquarie generally is lacking, with many of my constituents writing to me to complain of poor coverage.

The provision of internet and phone coverage needs to be addressed and I support an increase in the mobile network's capability to ensure that my constituents are not disadvantaged by living in regional New South Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leslie Williams', with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

The Hon Leslie Williams MP
Member for Port Macquarie
Deputy Speaker

ABN 11 236 901 601

18 June 2020

Mr M Long
Head of Development
Sovereign Hills
PO Box 392
PORT MACQUARIE NSW 2444

Dear Mr Long

Letter of Support - Round 5A of the Mobile Black Spot Program

It is with pleasure that I write in support of the submission by Sovereign Hills under Round 5a of the Federal Government's Mobile Black Spot Program to provide greater mobile coverage and network choice within the Port Macquarie-Hastings Local Government Area.

Notably, Port Macquarie and Sovereign Hills meet the following requirements to be considered for funding:

- Port Macquarie is a high priority, natural disaster-prone area, recently devastated by bushfire.
- Sovereign Hills, and Port Macquarie generally, are located along the major transport corridors of the Pacific Highway and Oxley Highway.
- Previously low population density of Thrumster has meant that the area has been overlooked in previous rounds of funding.

Port Macquarie is an important, growing regional metropolitan centre. As a community, we actively encourage the expansion of new housing and business, welcome an annual influx of university students, and support the healthy and connected lifestyle of our residents and visitors. All of these segments require and expect a reliable mobile and internet service, which also underpins the creation of and support for local jobs.

In addition to this:

- The Port Macquarie-Hastings region is expected to grow by 30% over the next 15 years. Population growth is heading west, towards Thrumster, and Sovereign Hills is expected to contribute much of that growth - over 8,000 new residents in the next 10 years.
- The Sovereign Hills Town Centre is classified as a Major Business Development Zone within the Port Macquarie Hastings Council Urban Growth Management Plan, and is a strategic site integral to the expansion of local and regional businesses.
- Port Macquarie is a tourist hotspot, attracting up to 1,500,000 visitors a year.

Mobile phone reception within Sovereign Hills, Thrumster and Port Macquarie generally is lacking. The provision of internet and phone coverage needs to be addressed and I support an increase in the mobile network's capability to ensure that the residents are not disadvantaged by living in regional New South Wales.

I wish Sovereign Hills all the best with its submission under the Round 5A of the Mobile Black Spot Program and hope our area will receive favourable consideration by the Federal Government.

Yours sincerely



Peta Pinson
MAYOR



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



LAKE INNES RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Att: Michael Long

17th June 2020

Lewis Land Group

PORT MACQUARIE, NSW, 2444

Dear Michael,

Re: Letter of Support - Mobile Blackspot program

We write regarding Sovereign Hills' submission for Round 5A of the Federal Government's Mobile Black Spot Program.

Whilst being an area known for its beautiful coastline, green forestry and national parks, Port Macquarie is also well known for its natural disasters – specifically bushfires. This is evidenced by the catastrophic bushfires that struck the region in late 2019 and early 2020. During this time, human resources at local brigades were stretched, and we did our best to keep the public safe and reduce the potential impact of the deadly fires on local residents and assets.

Reliable and effective communication is critical during an emergency to ensure that emergency services can communicate with one another, but also for the community to provide valuable feedback and communication to those organisations. Unfortunately, investment in appropriate infrastructure in Port Macquarie, and specifically the Thrumster & Lake Innes region is severely lacking and needs focus from the telecommunications carriers, as well as government assistance.

We have many "blackspots" in our local area, and in the interests of public safety requires immediate attention to a solution.

As a result, we support Sovereign Hills' submission to provide solutions to the growing needs of the local community.

Sincerely

Kyll Goodsell (*Captain*)

On behalf of all the team at **Lake Innes Rural Fire Brigade**

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Cnr Pacific Highway and Lake Innes Drive, Lake Innes NSW 2446



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NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

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PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.