

# Submission

## Mobile Black-Spot Program: Round 5A

**Request for Telstra mobile coverage for the Tyringham / Dundurrabin / Billy's Creek community, 35km West of Dorrigo in Northern NSW. This submission is lodged on behalf of the community by the Tyringham RFS brigade.**

The community consists of a closely-settled village at Dundurrabin with approximately 30 homes, with another 10 outlying homes in the immediate area, a further 30 homes are scattered on rural properties in the Billy's Creek area, and approximately another 20 homes mainly located on small rural properties centred in and around the Tyringham village area. The proposed coverage area in question runs along a 15-20km length of the Grafton-Armidale road.

There are a few specific locations in the area which do receive a patchy or intermittent Telstra signal, but over the whole area the Telstra reception is best described as either non-existent, unreliable or sub-standard. The Telstra signal is received from the Telstra towers at Hernani (15km to the South-West) and North Dorrigo (15km to the South-East), and is at the limit of reception from either of those towers.

During the 'Bees Nest' & 'Liberation Trail' bushfires which impacted the area continuously from 6 September to late November 2019, the critical nature of a substandard and mostly non-existent Telstra mobile phone service quickly became evident. On numerous occasions homes under threat had to be evacuated. The lack of a reliable Telstra mobile service meant that most residents had to be contacted either by landline or in person to facilitate these evacuations, which proved to be very time-consuming and in some cases unnecessarily dangerous for fire crews.

The use of mobile phone apps in firefighting operations are becoming commonplace and save time and improve accuracy of planning operations and information reporting. Apps are useless with no reception. It's also worth noting that the Tyringham RFS station, which for 3 months was used as the main staging area for the fires, has no Telstra mobile signal.

There is an Optus mobile transmitter based at Tyringham which, considering the undulating topography of the local area, provides quite an acceptable mobile service with reasonably good data speeds to most of the area and allows the option of using mobile broadband for household internet access. However currently there is no reliable Telstra mobile service for the community.

The Armidale-Grafton road is becoming increasingly busy, and is an important link between the Tablelands and the Coast. The current non-existent Telstra mobile coverage on this road for at least 60km, from just North of Hernani to the Nymboida village is well below general community expectation.

We feel that the current situation where a relatively compact rural community of approximately 300 residents doesn't have a reliable Telstra mobile service is unacceptable.

The impact on fire fighting efficiency and the general day-to-day operation of emergency services in this area due to the lack of a reliable Telstra mobile service is disappointing and frustrating. There have been numerous occasions of motorists being unable to contact emergency services due to the lack of a Telstra signal.

We ask that serious consideration be given to funding the installation of a Telstra mobile service under this current Round 5A of the Mobile Black Spot Program in the Tyringham area (given that a Telstra exchange already exists there). If sufficient co-operation was possible between the telco's, a low cost alternative to building new tower infrastructure, would be to co-locate Telstra transmitters on the existing Optus tower overlooking Tyringham.

Thank you for your time and we hope to get a positive response to our submission, and we look forward to one day getting the same level of mobile phone service which most Australians simply take for granted.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pete Singleton', written in a cursive style.

Pete Singleton  
Deputy Captain  
On behalf of Tyringham RFS brigade