



3 August 2018

2018 Regional Telecommunications Review Secretariat  
Department of Communications and the Arts  
GPO Box 2154  
Canberra ACT 2601

To Whom It May Concern,

## **Regional Telecommunications Review 2018**

Kentish Council welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Regional Telecommunications Review Committee 2018 Issues Paper regarding the proposed Optus Macro Base Station at Wilmot, Tasmania funded under the Mobile Black Spot Program Priority Location Round.

Kentish Council welcomes the installation of the Macro Base Station at Wilmot as part of the ongoing improvement to rural and remote mobile network coverage announced during 2016 by former Senator Fiona Nash, Minister for Regional Development, Regional Communications and Rural Health.

However, Council is concerned that the development of an Optus Macro Base Station in a region dominated by a single mobile network operator, may adversely affect the access of businesses, residents and emergency services to the mobile network without the inclusion of policies or infrastructure that supports multiple mobile network operators.

Inadequate mobile coverage remains a concern for Tasmanians living, travelling and working in regional areas. In 2011-12, the Review Committee identified the lack of mobile coverage as the issue of most concern to regional communities.

As a rural municipality, Kentish has a number of areas that are low or no coverage areas. The 2011 floods, in particular, highlighted the critical difficulty a lack of coverage posed for residents and emergency services, with Railton and Wilmot experiencing little to no communication. The availability of mobile infrastructure would improve communication during emergencies and consequently the safety of the affected communities. Wilmot faces particular challenges in that it is located in an area of difficult topography, yet provides access to a major Tasmanian tourism destination - Cradle Mountain National Park.



In significant portions of regional Tasmania, including Wilmot, mobile coverage is provided by a single mobile network operator. In the Wilmot region, the available mobile coverage is provided by Telstra. Indeed, the existing and proposed mobile base towers in the Kentish and Central Coast regions are operated by, or awarded to, Telstra – making Telstra the dominant provider of mobile network access in the Wilmot/Cradle Valley area.

The 2014 Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) submission to the Department of Communications supported the inclusion of open access and co-location provisions in the Mobile Coverage Programme. The LGAT, including Kentish Council, advocated that the purpose of the Mobile Coverage Programme was to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to improve both the coverage of mobile and broadband services in regional Tasmania and support competition in the provision of those services.

A lack of mobile network infrastructure and access to single mobile network operators has negative implications for the development of rural areas such as Wilmot, particularly in terms of emergency response, economic development and liveability. The introduction of a second mobile network operator to the region, without providing access to competing operators, may require those living, working and travelling in Wilmot to purchase a second mobile phone. This delivery model is unsupportable in terms of economic viability and customer service provision.

While it may be uneconomic to duplicate mobile infrastructure in regional areas, Kentish Council advocates that all new base stations funded under the Mobile Coverage Program should maintain a policy of open access and be capable of supporting the infrastructure of other mobile network providers. This pro-competition position may improve both the access to mobile network operators in rural and remote regions and promote competition amongst mobile network providers.

Yours sincerely,



Don Thwaites  
**MAYOR**