

## **Flying Minute - Mobile Black Spot Program Round 5A Design and Guidelines**

*By Ian Duncan, Executive Manager, Infrastructure and Roads*

**That the submission to the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications concerning the design of and guidelines for the Mobile Black Spot Program Round 5A be endorsed.**

**RESOLUTION 83.FM/2020**

**CARRIED**

### **Executive Summary**

- The Australian Government co-invests with mobile network operators such as Telstra and Optus to extend mobile phone service to areas that are not commercially viable, through the Mobile Black Spot Program.
- The Government is considering changes to the assessment criteria and guidelines for the next funding round.
- This submission offers conditional support for changes proposed to provide increased importance to areas at risk of natural disasters and to strengthen the resilience of the network exposure to power failures.
- Efforts to improve mobile telephone services along major freight transport routes are supported, but the submission argues that the criteria for this need to be broadened.

### **Attachments**

The submission is available at:

<https://walga.asn.au/getattachment/Documents/Mobile-Blackspot-Program-Guidelines-Round-5A-Submission-190620.pdf?lang=en-AU>

The discussion document is available at:

<https://www.communications.gov.au/have-your-say/consultation-design-options-round-5a-mobile-black-spot-program>

### **Policy Implications**

State Council Resolution      December 2017 – 128.6/2017

In the long term WALGA advocates for:

- improvements to tourism-related infrastructure and technology including mobile signals and WIFI in regional areas.

### **Background**

The Mobile Black Spot Program commenced in 2015 in response to concerns raised in the 2011/12 Regional Telecommunications Review by those living, working and travelling in regional Australia about inadequate mobile voice and broadband coverage. The program invests in new telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia.



There have been five funding rounds to date delivering 1229 mobile telephone base stations jointly funded by the Australian Government and the telecommunications carriers, including 303 (25%) located in Western Australia. The Guidelines for each funding round have been adjusted to focus on strategic or policy outcomes. As a result, the amount of investment in Western Australia has varied from 6% of the national total in Round 3 (Government Priority Locations) to 35% in Round 5.

Inadequate and unreliable mobile telephone services are an issue that have been placed on the agenda by Local Governments in several country Zones, most recently the Northern Country Zone and Great Eastern Country Zone.

The Government is seeking input on the design of the next funding round of the program. Up to \$43.2 million will be allocated under Round 5A.

## **Comment**

Western Australia has been successful in attracting significant Commonwealth investment to support mobile telephone communications in regional and remote areas. There remain many unmet needs in the State, so it is important that this investment continues.

Round 5A will seek investments for the remaining funds allocated by the Government for Round 5 of the Program. The discussion paper considers how the assessment criteria may be adjusted to deliver on emerging and unresolved policy issues, particularly in relation to resilience of the network during and following natural disasters.

The WALGA submission supports consideration of areas prone to natural disasters in the assessment guidelines provided that this is based on agreed criteria, rather than recent events.

The resilience of the infrastructure, specifically the provision of backup power is considered within the proposed guidelines and assessment criteria. Since Round 3 of the program, mobile base stations have been required to include at least 12 hours of auxiliary backup power. Separately some funding is being provided to retrofit additional backup power supplies in facilities constructed under funding rounds 1 and 2. The evidence from Western Australia indicates that the actual time the facility will operate on backup power may fall below the initial design time, as batteries age.

Providing mobile phone connectivity along major freight routes is supported, but it is demonstrated that using the National Road Transport Network and Roads of Strategic Importance network as the only basis for this will not prioritize investments where they are likely to be most utilized.

## **FLYING MINUTE OUTCOMES**

Total Invited to Survey: 24

Total Finished Survey: 16

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## Signature Page

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Completed Date</b>
Phillip	Blight	15/06/2020 at 22:07
Jenna	Ledgerwood	16/06/2020 at 7:29
Paul	Kelly	19/06/2020 at 10:09
Malcolm	Cullen	15/06/2020 at 21:20
Cheryl	Cowell	Not Completed
Stephen	Strange	16/06/2020 at 8:15
Chris	Mitchell JP	18/06/2020 at 18:18
Les	Price	17/06/2020 at 19:37
Russ	Fishwick JP	Not Completed
Karen	Chappel	17/06/2020 at 15:59
Michelle	Rich	Not Completed
Julie	Brown	18/06/2020 at 16:08
Doug	Thompson	15/06/2020 at 16:05
Carol	Adams OAM	18/06/2020 at 14:04
Logan	Howlett JP	18/06/2020 at 11:47
Tony	Dean	17/06/2020 at 18:43
Ken	Seymour	19/06/2020 at 9:36
Peter	Long	19/06/2020 at 10:03
Ronnie	Fleay	18/06/2020 at 13:44
Catherine	Ehrhardt	Not Completed
Cate	McCullough	Not Completed
Mark	Irwin	Not Completed
Ruth	Butterfield	Not Completed
Frank	Cvitan	Not Completed



## Responses

Created: 15/06/2020 at 15:09 Results Exported: 24/06/2020 at 1:10

(16) Endorse Recommendation

Phillip Blight (on: 15/06/2020 at 22:07), Jenna Ledgerwood (on: 16/06/2020 at 7:29), Paul Kelly (on: 19/06/2020 at 10:09), Malcolm Cullen (on: 15/06/2020 at 21:20), Stephen Strange (on: 16/06/2020 at 8:15), Chris Mitchell JP (on: 18/06/2020 at 18:18), Les Price (on: 17/06/2020 at 19:37), Karen Chappel (on: 17/06/2020 at 15:59), Julie Brown (on: 18/06/2020 at 16:08), Doug Thompson (on: 15/06/2020 at 16:05), Carol Adams OAM (on: 18/06/2020 at 14:04), Tony Dean (on: 17/06/2020 at 18:43), Ken Seymour (on: 19/06/2020 at 9:36), Peter Long (on: 19/06/2020 at 10:03), Ronnie Fleay (on: 18/06/2020 at 13:44) Logan Howlett JP (on: 18/06/2020 at 11:47).