



SENATOR THE HON MITCH FIFIELD
MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS
MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE SENATE

Mayor David O'Loughlin
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Schedule 3A of the Telecommunications Act 1997

Dear Mayor O'Loughlin

Thank you for your letter of 22 August 2017 about the submarine cable protection regime in Schedule 3A of the *Telecommunications Act 1997*.

The Australian Government recognises the important role that submarine cables play in carrying Australia's international voice and data traffic.

That is why the Government is funding the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to undertake a feasibility study into landing a submarine cable on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. The grant is enabling the Sunshine Coast Regional Council to employ a consultant to assess the benefits and costs of connecting an international submarine cable to the Sunshine Coast and to examine how to leverage private sector investment to unlock the economic value for such a cable.

Given the feasibility study is assessing a potential submarine cable to the Sunshine Coast, the Government will consider the Australian Local Government Association's proposal further in light of the feasibility study report. I am encouraged that the feasibility study has commenced and I look forward to consulting with Member for Fairfax Ted O'Brien MP and meeting with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and other interested parties upon its completion.

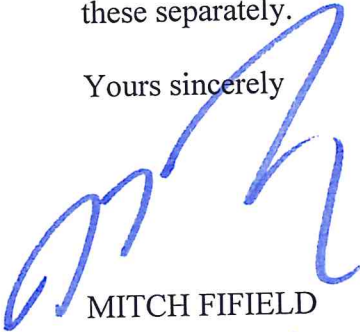
Meanwhile, should a proponent come forward with a proposal to install an international submarine cable to the Sunshine Coast, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (the ACMA) will be able to assess if sufficient detail is available to develop a proposal for a protection zone under the current submarine protection regime. Schedule 3A of that regime, to which your letter refers, enables the ACMA to declare a protection zone in relation to one or more submarine cables already installed or one or more submarine cables proposed to be installed in Australian waters.

The protection of submarine cables also affects other users of the sea. Once a submarine cable protection zone is declared, certain offshore activities are prohibited and restricted from

taking place in the zones. Prohibited activities include trawling, dredging, exploring for or exploiting resources other than marine species and mining. As such, Schedule 3A requires the ACMA to consult with stakeholders before declaring a protection zone. In this respect, the regime seeks to balance the need to protect critical infrastructure with the interests of other sea users.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention and I trust this information will be of assistance. I also note that you have written to me about other resolutions. I will respond to these separately.

Yours sincerely



MITCH FIFIELD

19/10/17