



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts

NGA MAIL	
ITEM No:	
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Mayor Troy Pickard
President
Australian Local Government Association
8 Geils Court
DEAKIN ACT 2600

Dear Mayor Pickard

National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA) Resolutions 31 and 32

Thank you for your letter to Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications and the Arts regarding Resolutions 31 and 32 raised in the National General Assembly of Local Government which fall within the communications portfolio. I am responding on his behalf, I apologise for the delay in responding.

Please find below our response to Resolutions 31 and 32 as raised in your letter.

Resolution 31

Resolution 31 of your letter proposed that the Australian Government commit further funding to the Mobile Black Spot Program.

Under round 1 of the program, \$100 million has been committed to deploy 499 new or upgraded mobile base stations across regional and remote Australia – 429 Telstra and 70 Vodafone base stations, including three in the Central Highlands Regional Council area.

The program has been highly successful in maximising co-contributions from third parties, including state and local governments and local communities. The collective total being invested in the 499 base stations under round 1 of the program is \$385 million.

The Government has committed \$60 million towards round 2 of the program. The Government has again sought to leverage additional funding from the mobile network operators and other levels of government, with a view to maximising the number of new or upgraded base stations which can be delivered. The application period for round 2 has closed. The locations of the base stations funded under round 2 are expected to be announced by the end of this year.

Earlier this year, the Government committed a further \$60 million for a third round of the program funding bringing the Government's total commitment towards the program to \$220 million.

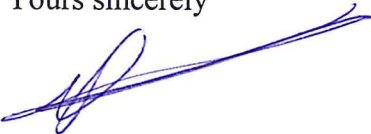
Resolution 32

Resolution 32 of your letter proposes that the Government amend legislation and the customer charter of NBN Co Ltd (nbn) to require it to provide emergency management telephones lines free of charge as part of its social obligations. I understand the resolution refers to Telstra's DISPLAN services which are offered to groups such as State Emergency Services (SES) and some local councils free of charge as part of Telstra's own social programs (noting that calls may be charged).

The decision to charge for such services is for Telstra to make, and the Department does not have a role to intercede in operational and commercial arrangements regarding service providers. By way of background, I understand that Telstra's provision of the services free of charge is predicated on Telstra owning the network infrastructure delivering the services. I understand that as services migrate to nbn network infrastructure, Telstra will begin charging for these services, as it utilises nbn network infrastructure (and those services that remain on the Telstra network prior to migration will remain free of charge).

Once again, thank you for taking the time to write and I hope you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely



Philip Smurthwaite
Acting Assistant Secretary
Regional Deployment Branch
4 November 2016