



The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS

The Hon Justine Elliot MP
Deputy Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

16 JAN 2015

Mobile phone and broadband services in Kuranda, Queensland

Dear Ms Elliot

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the petition presented by the Member for Leichhardt, the Hon Warren Entsch MP, concerning mobile phone services and broadband access in the Kuranda region of Far North Queensland.

I appreciate you bringing this petition to my attention and I am pleased to see that the residents of Kuranda and the broader region have an interest in improving the telecommunication services they receive.

Regarding mobile services in the Kuranda region, the Australian Government recognises the importance of reliable mobile coverage. As raised by the residents of Kuranda, the Government is investing \$100 million to improve mobile phone coverage in some outer metropolitan, regional and remote communities which do not currently have reliable coverage. The Government's investment is expected to generate at least matching funding from local and state governments, communities and industry.

The Mobile Black Spot Programme will improve coverage along major transport routes, in small communities and in locations prone to experiencing natural disasters, as well as addressing unique mobile coverage problems. The Government intends to commence a competitive selection process in the second half of 2014, with a view to announcing the locations which have been selected for funding in the first half of 2015.

Kuranda and Kuranda State Forest have been reported to the Department of Communications as having poor mobile coverage. This information will be provided to potential applicants to assist them in preparation of their funding under the programme.

In regard to broadband services, the Government is committed to completing the construction of the National Broadband Network (NBN) ensuring that all Australians have access to fast affordable broadband as soon as possible.

The NBN Co's national rollout plan released earlier this month shows that one in three Australian live or work in areas where the NBN will be accessible or under construction by June 2016. Around 379,000 homes and businesses across more than 80 cities, suburbs and

towns in Queensland are set to receive the National Broadband Network (NBN), including some 69,000 premises in Far North Queensland.

The new rollout plan also reveals that by June 2016:

- An additional 1.79 million premises in the fixed line footprint will have access or work underway.
- An additional 128,000 premises in the fixed wireless footprint will have access or work underway.

This is in addition to the Long Term Satellite Service, which will see two satellites launched in 2016 that will serve the most remote and inaccessible premises in the country.

The National Rollout Plan shows the commitment to rural and regional Australia. Of the areas receiving fixed-line rollout over 800,000 are outside of major urban areas. The 128,000 premises in the fixed wireless rollout are generally in rural and regional Australia and these premises are almost universally poorly served.

The release of the plan is an important milestone as the company works to provide the industry and consumers reliable and credible information about the progress of the network, so they are able to plan and invest for the future. More information about the NBN rollout in the Kuranda region will be published by NBN Co on its website www.nbnco.com.au.

I note that some residents in the region are currently using the Interim Satellite Service (ISS) provided by NBN Co. On 3 April 2014, I announced that NBN Co will spend more than \$34 million to improve and expand provisional satellite broadband services in regional and rural Australia.

This expenditure includes new monitoring tools to enable NBN Co to better manage existing ISS capacity. This will help prevent high end users unfairly slowing the service levels of all other users. Additionally, the NBN Co Satellite Support Scheme (NSS Scheme) is a new subsidy scheme designed to help up to 9000 premises, including homes, farms and small businesses, to purchase commercial satellite services. I encourage the residents of Kuranda to check eligibility for the NSS at www.nbnco.com.au/satellite or by calling the NBN Co's Contact Centre on 1800 687 626.

Thank you for bringing this petition and the concerns of the residents of the Kuranda region to my attention. I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Malcolm Turnbull