



Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie

Deputy Leader of The Nationals
Minister for Regional Services
Minister for Sport
Minister for Local Government and Decentralisation
Senator for Victoria

Lithgow City Council

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Mr Graeme Faulkner
General Manger,
Lithgow City Council
PO Box 19
LITHGOW NSW 2790

03 JAN 2019

Dear Mr Faulkner

Thank you for your email of 6 November 2018 on behalf of the residents of the Kanimbla Valley about the Mobile Black Spot Program (the Program). My sincere apologies for the delay in responding.

The Liberal National Government has committed \$220 million to the Program to invest in telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia, particularly in the regions.

As you may be aware, in June this year the Liberal National Government announced it will invest \$25 million to a fourth round of the Program to address more black spot areas across regional Australia. This new round demonstrates the Liberal National's commitment to improving communication services for those who live, work and travel in regional and remote parts of the country.

To support Round 4 of the program, the National Mobile Black Spot Database (the Database) was re-opened for a period of four weeks from 13 September to 11 October 2018 for new black spot nominations. Input was sought from State, Territory, and local governments, as well as business and community organisations to ensure black spot locations which provided strong economic or social benefits to communities including public interest premises such as schools, hospitals, indigenous communities and emergency facilities are considered.

I wrote to local, State and Territory governments, Federal Senators and Federal Members of Parliament, in electorates with eligible areas, inviting nomination of black spot locations for inclusion on the Database. Members of the public who wished to have their mobile black spots included in the Database were encouraged to provide details of black spot locations to their local council or Federal representative.

As part of the nomination process, Mr Andrew Gee MP, submitted several black spot nominations, including the Lowther and Kanimbla Valleys. These nominations, along with other new black spot nominations, have been added to the Database and are able to be considered for funding under Round 4.

It is important to note that funding is still available for locations that are not registered on the Database. The Database provides a tool for the Department of Communication and the Arts, who manage and administer the Program, and mobile network operators to identify those areas where there are reported issues with mobile coverage and to assist applicants to develop funding proposals for Round 4. Applicants can therefore be approached directly on the possibility of funding.

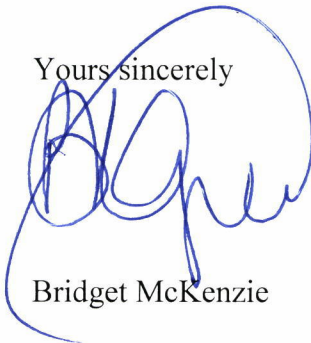
On 15 October 2018, the Round 4 guidelines were released and applications are now being sought from mobile network operators and infrastructure providers. In order to assist the state and territory governments in fully engaging with the mobile network operators on proposals and organising co-contributions, I have extended the due date for Round 4 applications from 10 December 2018 to 10 January 2019.

I have recently written to the Kanimbla Valley Mobile Phone Black Spot Action Group applauding their work to identify mobile black spots in the area. Input and support from the local community is important and assists mobile network operators in developing proposals for funding under the Program. I understand that the Action Group is providing information to the mobile network operators to help develop an application for Round 4 of the Program.

More information about the Program, including Round 4, is available on the Department of Communications and the Arts website at www.communications.gov.au/mbbsp.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely



Bridget McKenzie