



Petition

Registration No.	46
Title	Mobile Phone Service coverage
Presented on	28 April 2015
Presented by	Ms Anderson (Member for Namatjira)
Referred to	Minister for Corporate and Information Services (Hon Peter Styles MLA)
Date referred	29 April 2015
Response due	17 November 2014
Response received	1 September 2015
Response presented	15 September 2015

Petition

No Mobile phone coverage compromises the safety of all travellers and limits the growth of the small business sector on a major Australian Highway. It restricts communication between travellers and local residents and emergency events.

Response

The petition states that 'No mobile phone coverage compromises the safety of all travellers and limits the growth of the small business sector on a major Australian Highway. It restricts communication between travellers and local residents and emergency services during emergency events.'

The Australian Government has responsibility for telecommunication services across the nation, including all Northern Territory locations.

The Northern Territory Government considers telecommunications services to be a key economic development driver and has repeatedly lobbied the Australian Government to improve and expand telecommunications services in the Territory, particularly for remote communities.

There is mobile phone coverage for approximately one third of the major national highways in the Northern Territory. While complete coverage of major highways and transport corridors is a desirable goal, the total cost is prohibitive and must be considered within the context of competing priorities and resource capacity.

In June 2015, the Australian Government announced five communities in the Northern Territory would be provided with mobile phone services under the Mobile Black Spots Programme. These communities are Minjilang, Finke, Imanpa, Wallace Rockhole and Mount Liebig. The selection of the communities followed an exhaustive assessment process conducted by the Australian Government and telecommunications carriers.

The Northern Territory Government has invested and will continue to invest within our capacity in the infrastructure necessary to expand telecommunications services into remote areas. The government's recent history in partnering with Telstra to deliver remote telecommunication services has seen a further 13 remote communities with mobile and broadband services connected over 2013 and 2014 through Project 13 and Project Sandover.

To continue this focus, the Northern Territory Government is entering into a joint agreement with Telstra to further extend broadband and mobile phone coverage to remote areas in the Northern Territory.

Locations will be selected based on a range of determinative factors, including population, existing infrastructure, development opportunities, terrain, technology solution, Telstra's service and commercial requirements, community views, government services, costs, proximity to transport corridors and tourist sites and safety issues.

This joint program will soon be announced with works expected to begin later in 2015-16 following detailed geo-technical appraisals by Telstra.

The government also supports any innovative technology that will improve the coverage of telecommunications services into remote locations. We have funded the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) to install 22 mobile hot spots in the Central Australia region. The hot spots clever technology is designed and built by CAT in Alice Springs; it requires no power or electronics, and will extend the reach of existing mobile phone services, providing a valuable service to nearby communities and travellers.

The expansion of mobile phone coverage to reduce the significant areas of the Northern Territory that do not have adequate telecommunications services, including transport corridors, is one of the priorities of this government.