



## **THE HON MARK COULTON MP**

Minister for Regional Health, Regional Communications and Local Government  
Federal Member for Parkes

Cr Laurene Bonza  
President  
Shire of Dundas  
PO Box 163  
NORSEMAN WA 6443  
[shire@dundas.wa.gov.au](mailto:shire@dundas.wa.gov.au)

Dear Mayor

### **Mobile Black Spot Program – Round 5A open for applications**

On 18 November 2020 the Australian Government opened the competitive assessment process for Round 5A of the Mobile Black Spot Program (the Program) and is now calling for applications from Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and Mobile Network Infrastructure Providers (MNIPs). I am writing to you in relation to this Program as your Council includes areas that are classified as other than Major Urban, and that are therefore eligible for consideration under the Program.

The Government has committed \$380 million to the Program to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia. To date, the Program has funded more than 1,200 new mobile base stations, more than 880 of which are already on air and are delivering new coverage in regional areas.

The Government has refreshed the design of the Program for Round 5A based on feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, including many councils. This round includes a focus on improving mobile connectivity along major transport corridors and in disaster-prone regions, and on testing new technologies that support shared mobile infrastructure in regional areas.

The Round 5A Program Guidelines were published on the Government's GrantConnect website on 18 November 2020. Applications from eligible applicants are due by 10 February 2021.

Past experience has shown that when a local council engages with applicants, this increases the likelihood that a base station application will be put forward in its area. I would encourage you to engage with the MNOs and MNIPs to identify locations within your local government area that would benefit from an application for funding being put forward.

A key factor in the success to this Program has been the support provided by state and local governments and third-parties, including funding co-contributions. You may wish to consider whether your Council could offer a financial or in-kind contribution to encourage proposals for mobile black spots in your area, though this is not a mandatory requirement of the Program.

In-kind contributions could be in the form of any of the following, but are not limited to:

- providing leasehold tenure for land at a suitable site for a base station at zero or concessional cost;
- providing civil works (such as the cost of creating an access road to the site) at zero or concessional cost;
- providing access to a facility (such as an emergency services or other tower); or
- providing a connection to an existing power source.

I would also like to draw your attention to the important role that councils play in delivering towers through local planning processes. I would be grateful if you could work with telecommunications providers in a timely fashion to consider any planning applications.

Given the significant impacts on regional communities from the 2019-20 bushfires, recent floods, drought and the COVID-19 pandemic, there has never been a more important time for all stakeholders to work collaboratively to deliver improved connectivity in the regions to assist in the recovery and ongoing viability of regional Australia and local communities.

Further information about Round 5A, including links to the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, is available on the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications' website at [communications.gov.au/mbsp](https://communications.gov.au/mbsp) or by contacting [MBSPRound5@communications.gov.au](mailto:MBSPRound5@communications.gov.au).

I look forward to your support for this important Program, which is delivering improved mobile coverage to regional and remote Australia.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Coulton', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Mark Coulton**