

Hon. Peter Walsh MP

Member for Murray Plains | Leader of The Nationals

Thursday 9 March, 2017

ACCC Mobile Roaming Inquiry
MobileRoamingInquiry@acc.gov.au

The Victorian Nationals offer the following comments in response to the ACCC's Mobile Roaming Inquiry discussion paper:

The Nationals Members of Parliament (MPs) in Victoria represent 61 per cent of Victoria's land mass and 8 per cent of the state's population. The nature of this actuality means our 10 MPs also represent many of the areas with either no, or very limited, mobile service. As a consequence Nationals MPs have become very good at both playing 'phone-tag' and cursing at our dashboards as calls drop out. We also hear all too frequently from the constituents who live and do business in our electorates that mobile coverage is inadequate, frustrating or non-existent depending on the location.

In this debate over the regulation of mobile roaming, we want to state our position that there must be sustained investment in the mobile footprint and mobile technology in order to have mobile services that meets community service and price expectations.

Overwhelmingly, the electorates we represent are only serviced by the Telstra mobile network. We acknowledge Telstra's history of investment in its regional network, including rural and remote areas. This investment is continuing through the Mobile Blackspot Programme public-private partnership and Telstra's planned expansion and upgrade of their 3G and 4G networks. While gaps remain, we do acknowledge that this investment has delivered improvements to mobile connectivity in parts of regional Victoria. We would be concerned about any regulatory changes that might put at risk planned upgrade work, or indeed any potential for future investment.

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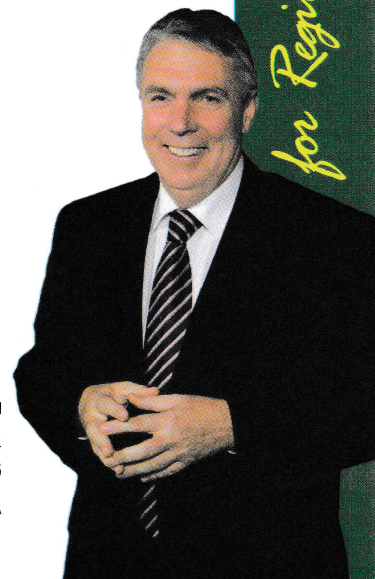
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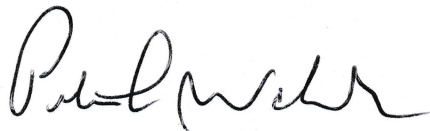
Investment is critical to expand the mobile coverage footprint across our state, and it is critical in order to secure technology upgrades in step with our communities' increasing demands for mobile data. We must have a regulatory environment where telcos are able and willing to invest and co-invest to increase coverage beyond commercially lucrative locations.

In summary, the Victorian Nationals support a regulatory system that provides incentive for individual telcos to invest in regional Victoria, including rural and remote areas. A future regulatory system that deters infrastructure and technology investments by undermining market advantage would be detrimental to regional, rural and remote areas. Consequentially, such a regulatory regime would be totally unacceptable for the communities we represent.

The Victorian Nationals look forward to the ACCC draft decision and we will closely scrutinise how any proposed changes would impact improved mobile connectivity for the people we represent.

Thank you for receiving our submission.

Yours sincerely



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