

Productivity Commission USO Review

Aerostats All Australia AAA Mobile Coverage



3 August 2016

Mr Paul Lindwall

Commissioner

Productivity Commission

GPO Box 1428

Canberra City ACT 2601

Dear Mr Lindwall,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Commission's inquiry into the Telecommunications Universal Service Obligation (USO).

We think it's time to be "courageous" for all Remote and Regional Australians!

Successive Regional Reviews of Telecommunications in Australia over the last 10 years have called for policy recognition of the mobile service for regional Australians to be made available wherever they live, work and play. Hundreds of millions of dollars are paid out by Government and the industry each year to subsidise the provision of an increasingly irrelevant fixed telephone service under a number of programs, the major one being the Universal Service Obligation.

While the current Government has taken steps under its Mobile Black Spot Program to improve coverage "at the margins" almost 70% of the land area will remain without mobile coverage. Now Aerostats All Australia (AAA) provides us an opportunity for a "courageous decision" to take the next steps and realise a truly breakthrough solution that addresses this roadblock. This feasibility study by AAA identifies the way forward.

AAA is agnostic as to the distribution of funds amongst carriers but proposes the Commonwealth to instruct carriers receiving USO funds to use AAA technologies for the provision of an all Australia mobile service coverage particularly in areas of remote Australia where provision of such service would otherwise be prohibitively expensive. Existing USO obligations in remote Australia should be gradually shifted across to the whole of Australia mobile Voice over LTE (VoLTE), data and broadband Internet coverage over a multi-year and multi-phased program as proposed by AAA.

Yours sincerely

Ben Livson

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