



JULIAN LEESER MP

Federal Member for Berowra

24 August 2020

Dear Assistant Minister,

I wish to provide a submission requesting that the Commonwealth commit additional investment in telecommunications infrastructure for outer-metropolitan areas of capital cities, such as the Berowra electorate.

Over the past twelve months I have become increasingly concerned that inadequate telecommunications infrastructure is compromising the work, study and safety of residents in my electorate.

I have been working hard to encourage telecommunications companies to increase their investment in our region and while I have made some progress, I do not believe these companies will make the investments required to meet the need.

We will not see the required step change in telecommunications quality and accessibility, unless the Commonwealth makes substantial additional investment in mobile blackspots and in a stage two upgrade of the NBN network with an initial focus on outer-metropolitan areas like the Berowra electorate.

Telecommunications is an essential service. It is costly to build, but it is essential for business to operate and for students to study. As technology continues to develop the demands on that infrastructure will only increase. Current investment is already struggling to keep pace with demand.

The Berowra electorate covers an area from the Hawkesbury River in the north, to the M2, Pennant Hills Road and North Rocks Road in the South.

Over the past 12 months I have received over hundreds of complaints regarding telecommunications in the electorate. These relate to mobile coverage and also to dissatisfaction with broadband services.

People in my electorate cannot rely on telecommunications provision making it extremely difficult for them to conduct their business and essential activities. One school in my electorate, just 45min

from the center of Sydney, was unable to operate during lock-down because online learning was impossible for most of their students.

I have heard from teachers who taught from supermarket carparks in order to be able to access the necessary signal and doctors who were unable to access critical files when on call.

Some of the most alarming complaints were raised during the summer when the Gosper's Mountain fire came dangerously close to the Berowra electorate.

During the worst days of the fire season, the Fire Control Centre at Kenthurst had no telecommunications access whatsoever and throughout the season, dozens of firefighters were unable to receive notifications of fires and were unable to communicate with one another due to mobile telephone blackspots. I have raised these matters directly with Telstra and NBN and also in the Round 5A Mobile Blackspot review and with the Royal Commission into Natural Disaster Arrangements.

Telecommunications infrastructure will not be provided to an adequate level if commercial interests alone determine provision. The Commonwealth needs to plan a second stage investment in broadband technology, for outer-metropolitan areas such as the Berowra electorate, and also needs to invest further in a redirected mobile blackspot program that will cater to outer metropolitan areas that are at high risk of experiencing natural disasters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Julian Leeser', written in a cursive style.

Julian Leeser MP