



24 November 2016

OPINION
TONY PASIN MP
MEMBER FOR BARKER

MOBILE BLACK SPOTS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

As your regular readers would recognise, improving telecommunications infrastructure across Barker is one of the highest priorities for me.

Upon being elected in 2013 I was looking forward to seeing the Coalition Government's Mobile Blackspot Programme rolled out across the nation and looked forward to reaping some of these dividends for regional South Australia.

How naive I was to think that our State Government might recognise the unprecedented opportunity lying before it and actually commit to investing in the programme.

Round one included a \$100 million commitment from the Federal Government. In addition to Federal Government funding the programme included a commitment from telecommunication companies of \$185 million, and State Governments contributing in excess of \$87 million. Local Government, businesses and community organisations also contributed \$1.7 million.

This co-operative approach to improving mobile blackspots in regional areas across the country resulted in a total 499 new or improved mobile phone towers from a total pool of \$385 million. It must be noted however that of the \$87 million from State Governments, our South Australia Labor Government contributed nothing. No surprise then that South Australia received the bare minimum number of towers which included only two in Barker.

Compare this with our neighbours across the border in Victoria. The Victorian State Government saw the opportunity that the South Australian Government did not and contributed \$21 million. Victoria received 110 new or upgraded towers.

Round two of the programme is due to be finalised very soon. Despite a long campaign by myself and my Federal colleague Rowan Ramsey to lobby the State Government to contribute a meaningful sum to Round two, the South Australian State Government has again failed to grasp this opportunity by putting forward an insultingly low \$2 million.

Round two of the programme includes a further \$60 million of Federal Government funding to be allocated in the same way as Round one; final decisions of which sites will be funded are based on value for taxpayer's money. The more co-contributions offered by third parties (namely State and/or Local Governments), the more attractive a site becomes.

The question remains what will our State Government's poultry \$2 million co-contribution translate into for South Australia in Round two?

I fear that as with many issues we face outside metropolitan Adelaide, the State Government neither understands nor cares what their country constituents struggle with. It's sad that improved telecommunications in regional South Australia could only attract \$2 million from Premier Weatherill but an O'Bahn extension shaving 7 minutes off a bus trip from the suburbs is worth an investment of \$160 million.

Contact: Zoe Darling – 8531 2466