



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Federation Chamber**

**CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS**

**Petition: Mobile Phone Coverage**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 15 May 2013**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Wednesday, 15 May 2013  
**Page** 3361  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Chester, Darren, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** No  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

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**Mr CHESTER** (Gippsland) (09:54): I rise to table a petition which has been found to be in order by the Petitions Committee.

*The petition read as follows—*

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

**This petition of** citizens of Australia, **draws to the attention of the House** inadequate mobile phone coverage at Lake Tyers Beach.

The lack of coverage compromises the safety of beachgoers and recreational boat users while limiting growth in the small business sector.

It also restricts communication between local residents and emergency services during emergency events.

**We therefore ask the House of Representatives to** take steps to rectify mobile phone coverage at Lake Tyers Beach from 287 citizens.

Petition received.

This petition highlights ongoing concerns within my community about this government's failure to improve mobile phone coverage in regional areas. There is a lot of talk in this place and plenty of debate out in the community about the National Broadband Network—which communities will miss out, what download speeds will be available—but to the best of my knowledge no-one has ever died because they could not download a movie fast enough. In my community, lives are at risk everyday because of this government's failure to improve mobile phone coverage in some of the areas most prone to natural disasters in particular.

There are areas in my community located a long distance from medical assistance and people who sustain serious injuries have no prospect at all of calling for assistance because the mobile phone coverage is simply nonexistent. There are areas of the Princes Highway and the Monaro Highway where there is no coverage whatsoever. These are sections of highway where there are high speeds, regular crashes with wildlife and also run-off road crashes or serious accidents involving two vehicles. These are isolated parts of the state and people have no capacity to call for help.

The petition before the House from the Lake Tyers Beach community highlights both the social and the economic impacts of the government's failure to assist the industry to provide mobile phone coverage. It is a popular beach and recreational boating location. The principal petitioner is a local tourism industry operator and he makes the point that, in terms of his business, it is difficult when his customers cannot call either family or friends when they are visiting in the community and they cannot call for taxis if they visit his establishment. There are many people who have signed this petition who do not live in the immediate community but visit the region over the holiday period and they are frustrated by the experience of not being able to use their mobile phones when they are visiting.

There have been significant improvements made in mobile phone coverage across the Gippsland region over the past decade, but they are all funded by the previous coalition government in partnership with the telecommunications industry. The Rudd and Gillard governments have failed miserably in relation to the mobile phone coverage. The government should have introduced a mobile phone black spot program to work in partnership with the industry and also local and state governments to improve safety and boost regional productivity. For a very modest investment, the federal government could have delivered major returns in terms of productivity and the safety of my community.

More broadly, I would argue that this government's failure also extends to its lack of responsibility in relation to the emergency alert warning system, which the government has spent \$26 million rolling out across Australia so that people can receive a text warning in the case of a natural disaster, such as a bushfire or a flood. I do not condemn the system because I believe that it has a great deal of merit. But I want to make the point that you should not depend on that system because in vast areas of regional Australia you simply will not receive any warning whatsoever, because this government has failed to improve mobile phone coverage across our nation.