



**SENATOR THE HON MITCH FIFIELD**  
**MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS**  
**MINISTER FOR THE ARTS**  
**MANAGER OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS IN THE SENATE**

Mr Michael Parnell  
Wireless Internet Service Provider Association of Australia  
47-53 Kinghorn Street  
NOWRA NSW 2541

## **ACMA proposal to re-farm 3.6 GHz spectrum**

Dear Mr Parnell

Thank you for your letter of 19 November 2017 on behalf of the Wireless Internet Service Provider Association of Australia (WISP-AU) regarding the Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) proposal to re-farm spectrum in the 3.6 GHz band.

I note your concerns about the potential sale of spectrum in the 3.6 GHz band. As you know, the ACMA conducted a consultation process on a proposed recommendation which closed on 27 November 2017. As with all of the ACMA's recommendations, I will carefully consider the final form of the recommendation, including the implications for regional Australians, before making a decision on the future of the 3.6 GHz band.

I am conscious of the important role that wireless internet providers play in delivering connectivity to consumers in regional Australia. At the same time, I am acutely aware of the prominent role which 5G networks will play in coming years – for both consumer broadband services and across the Australian economy more broadly. It is my hope that these two factors can both be accommodated in any forthcoming recommendation from the ACMA.

I note that in its consultation paper, the ACMA proposed lengthy transitional arrangements for incumbents in the band, including WISPs. This included a re-allocation period of up to seven years, which would allow incumbents in the band to continue to deliver services until well into next decade, when the current generation of wireless broadband technologies will likely be obsolete.

I share your concerns about the availability of reliable broadband service in regional Australia, which is why the Government is committed to the ongoing rollout of the National Broadband Network. The NBN complements the networks provided by WISP-AU members and the mobile broadband networks provided by Telstra, Optus and Vodafone. Today, the NBN fixed wireless network is available to 550,000 homes, and over 200,000 homes are connected. With so many homes in regional Australia to be served by technologies dependent on spectrum, the Government sees spectrum as a scarce and valuable resource which should be put to its highest-value use.

To address another issue raised in your letter, the Australian Government is supportive of spectrum sharing arrangements when circumstances permit, and I am advised that my office has previously encouraged you to continue your engagement with the ACMA on possible sharing models. I note that the ACMA's recent Five Year Spectrum Outlook flagged the 3.3-3.4 GHz and 4.8-4.99 GHz bands as candidates for consideration of potential dynamic spectrum sharing arrangements.

I note that your letter also raises concerns regarding proposed legislative amendments, which remain in exposure draft form. As you are aware, the Government is reforming the spectrum management framework in Australia, including developing new legislation to manage radiocommunications. The current framework calls for significant ministerial involvement in the primarily day-to-day operations of the ACMA. A fundamental principle of the new legislation is that it allows the ACMA to make routine policy decisions on the management of the spectrum. However, should the legislation be passed, the Minister will still have appropriate oversight of the exercise of the ACMA's regulatory powers, including maintaining the ability to direct the ACMA on its spectrum management functions, if required.

Thank you for bringing WISP-AU's concerns to my attention. I trust this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely



MITCH FIFIELD

18/12/17