



AIREYS INLET AND DISTRICT ASSOCIATION INC

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<http://www.aireys-inlet.org>

(Reg. No. A000710V)

21 December

The Hon Sarah Henderson MP
Member for Corangamite

Dear Ms Henderson

Re: Mobile Black Spot Program – Second Round

I write on behalf of the Aireys Inlet and District Association (AIDA) regarding an article in the Surf Coast Times (17/12/15) encouraging those Corangamite communities that missed out in the first round of the Mobile Black Spot Program to reapply.

AIDA is an organisation that represents almost 400 members in your Corangamite electorate on the Surf Coast of Victoria. Although we believe it unnecessary, we could enlist most members to write to you if numbers make a difference. We believe that numbers of residents potentially and adversely impacted would be a more sensible criterion.

We consider that our townships of Aireys Inlet, Fairhaven, Moggs Creek and Eastern View meet the stated criteria for the program.

Effective communication in our region can be a matter of life and death in the summer bushfire season. Residents depend entirely on mobile coverage to access all services as recommended by the fire services, ie radio, phone, cfa app (internet), especially for the visitors who usually have no other access while on the coast. The number of residents in Lorne, Aireys Inlet and district and Anglesea during the peak summer period is almost 40,000 (figures from Enterprise Geelong 2012). This number does not include day-trippers or those passing through the towns. The only effective escape route for residents and visitors to the three towns is the Great Ocean Road. Without early warning via the FireReady app and other mobile communications, not all 40,000 will escape because the Great Ocean Road is so congested.

In the area from Lorne to Anglesea, comparatively few reside in winter but the number swells substantially in summer as follows:

- Aireys and district - permanent 1000, summer peak 8000
- Anglesea - permanent 2500, summer peak 15,000
- Lorne - permanent 1500, summer peak 16,000

The difference in distribution of residents between most of the year and peak summer tells the key story. The mobile system more or less copes in winter, at least in the townships, but with the summer numbers it frequently fails totally or download speeds become pathetically slow. It is the summer period that is critical in so many ways. We live in one of the most bushfire prone areas in Australia and consequently need access to our FireReady app, to mobile bushfire warning alerts and for contact with relatives. Furthermore businesses need to be able to carry on and provide services. Without phone communication, so much falls in a heap and life becomes more hazardous.

The Telstra Mobile Network coverage map indicates that service should be better than is experienced by locals. The reality is that when one drives from Aireys Inlet to Lorne or to Anglesea, mobile coverage drops out repeatedly. This is the winter situation. It is far worse in summer when this effective communication can be life saving. The western part of Anglesea along the Great Ocean Rd, even in winter, often has poor or no coverage, despite what is on Telstra's network coverage map. And we are using an up-to-date phone so inadequate equipment is not the problem.

AIDA (and its 400 members) is grateful for your attempt to improve mobile coverage in Corangamite. We were very disappointed to not get supported in the first round of applications as we felt that we met the criteria and the need is so significant. Maybe AIDA's second attempt will go better.

If I can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to get back to me.

Yours Sincerely

Charlotte Allen
President