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27 MAY 2026

Ms Tabatha Badger MP
Green Member for Lyons
C/o Laura.Ross@parlimanet.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Badger

Thank you for your constituency question on 21 May 2026 regarding concerns raised by your constituents about telecommunications connectivity in the Central Highlands.

Blackspots, network congestion and service quality are well known issues nationally. In December 2024, the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee delivered its report to the Australian Government. Among the issues identified, the review confirmed that:

- a) Existing mobile networks in many regional areas are under pressure and facing congestion and capacity issues that require urgent attention to ensure reliable service; and
- b) Extending terrestrial mobile coverage remains prohibitively expensive.

Since the shutdown of the 3G networks, some parts of Tasmania have been experiencing poorer mobile coverage.

Prior to the 3G shutdown, telecommunications providers indicated that they would not switch off their 3G networks until the 4G networks had achieved 3G network equivalence. However, telecommunications providers advised that some customers who had previously received 3G coverage outside of the published maps – referred to as ‘fortuitous coverage’ – would not be guaranteed to receive the same incidental coverage.

The Tasmanian Government has been working with Optus and Telstra through federal initiatives such as Mobile Black Spot Program (MBSP) and Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) to improve network connectivity for affected areas.

We are aware that both Telstra and Optus are partnering with satellite communication providers to develop direct-to-handset (DTH) technology, which has the potential to significantly improve connectivity in regional areas. Telstra’s Starlink-enabled short message service (SMS) is now available to customers in Tasmania. However, there remains no clear timeline for when this technology will support voice calls, nor certainty about what handset limitations may apply as the service evolves.

The Mobile Black Spot Program (the MBSP), funded under the Australian Government's Better Connectivity Plan, invests in telecommunications infrastructure to improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia.

The Tasmanian Government has contributed a total of \$880,000 towards Tasmanian projects over the eight rounds, including support for Bothwell, Brandum, Cramps Bay, Hamilton, Miena, Steppes, Tarraleah, Wayatinah and Bradys Lake.

Historically, Tasmania has benefitted from the Australian Government practice of ensuring that funding and projects are allocated across Australia's states and territories.

The Tasmanian Government will continue to work with the Federal Government to ensure future MBSP grant rounds improve telecommunications infrastructure across the state, including the area around Great Lake – to ensure it meets the same standard as our mainland counterparts.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Ogilvie', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP

Minister for the Innovation, Science and the Digital Economy