The Hon Julia Gillard MP
Prime Minister
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

30 JUL 2012

Dear Prime Minister

We write to you regarding the development of a national Public Safety Mobile Broadband capability. New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland seek your support to ensure that States receive a sufficient allocation of radiofrequency spectrum to meet the current and future needs of our public safety agencies, whose work is vital for the protection of life and property.

As States with large populations, Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales are frequent and heavy users of public safety telecommunications. We seek to ensure that this capability would be designed and operated in a way that recognises our heightened needs.

A critical enabling requirement for this capability is the allocation of sufficient radiofrequency spectrum. The Australian and Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has indicated that it is willing to allocate a portion of spectrum from the 800MHz band for use by public safety agencies, although no specific amount has currently been identified. This allocation is subject to jurisdictions demonstrating that any allocation will be put to effective, efficient and timely use.

Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland expect that the Commonwealth will give a commitment to allocating sufficient spectrum for the current and future needs of emergency services. This should, as an absolute minimum, be two bandwidth segments of 10MHz of spectrum. As the capability that will be built on this spectrum will produce a significant public safety benefit for the people of Australia, we expect that the Commonwealth will make spectrum available at no cost to States and Territories.

Further, the costs arising from building this capability must be transparent and equitably shared between the Commonwealth and the States. We also note that:

- the Commonwealth has a timetable to sell the 700 MHz spectrum and offer States bandwidth on the 800 MHz spectrum. Building a capability on the 800 MHz spectrum will result in the States incurring additional costs, particularly to purchase and maintain equipment to establish a public safety capability on this spectrum;

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- if the Commonwealth continues with its proposal to sell the 700 MHz band it will gain a significant financial dividend. Part of this dividend should be spent on the costs arising from building a technically robust capability for public safety agencies in the 800 MHz range; and

- States and Territories must be given a substantive role in governance arrangements for implementation and ongoing management of public safety mobile broadband.

Jurisdictions are working collaboratively to develop this capability through the Public Safety Mobile Broadband Steering Committee which will deliver, in late 2012, a National Implementation Plan to the Standing Council for Police and Emergency Services (SCPEM). SCPEM is expected to report to the Council of Australian Governments on the issue by the end of 2012. However, uncertainty regarding how much spectrum will be allocated for this capability and how much this spectrum will cost has created a challenging environment for progressing this complex national project.

Given the need for all jurisdictions to make important decisions within tight timeframes as to whether to commit to a Public Safety Mobile Broadband capability, we look forward to your advice on this matter as soon as practicable.

Regards

Barry O'Farrell MP
Premier of New South Wales

Ted Baillieu MLA
Premier of Victoria

Campbell Newman MP
Premier of Queensland

Colin Barnett MLA
Premier of Western Australia

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