



PUBLIC SAFETY MOBILE BROADBAND

PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT REPORT

Local Government Association of Queensland Ltd

7 OCTOBER 2015

The Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ) is the peak body for local government in Queensland. It is a not-for-profit association set up solely to serve councils and their individual needs. The LGAQ has been advising, supporting and representing local councils since 1896, allowing them to improve their operations and strengthen relationships with their communities. The LGAQ does this by connecting councils to people and places that count; supporting their drive to innovate and improve service delivery through smart services and sustainable solutions; and delivering them the means to achieve community, professional and political excellence.

Executive Summary

Queensland councils have a statutory obligation under Section 80 of the Queensland Disaster Management Act (2003) to effectively manage events in their area. In order for councils to meet these obligations, access to value-adding telecommunication services, particularly mobile broadband services are becoming increasingly important.

At present, the Productivity Commission's draft Report on Public Safety Mobile Broadband does not adequately recognise the role that local government plays in disaster management. Hence, the LGAQ seeks the inclusion of councils in the Report, which would allow councils to access those emerging technologies and new services that are, or will be available through public mobile broadband. Councils should have the same access to mobile broadband services as Federal and State Government agencies.

Queensland councils use advance telecommunication services in various ways, including more than 120 services of the Federal Government's Wireless Priority Service System (WPSS). As WPSS prioritises voice on a congested mobile base station, it is our understanding that the prioritising of data is the next logical step in ensuring councils have the necessary tools to manage events.

It is recognised that technologies, products and services are evolving very quickly, and hence councils need to have access to these advancements as they become available to assist in the management of events.

Current Situation

Local government is a disaster management lead agency and has a number of statutory responsibilities under the Section 80 of the Queensland Disaster Management Act (2003).

This includes the following responsibilities:

- has a disaster response capability;
- approves its Local Disaster Management Plan (LDMP);
- promptly collects and disseminates information about an event or a disaster in its area to the District Disaster Coordinator (DDC); and
- performs other functions given to local government under the Act.

Hence, in Queensland, it is primarily the responsibility of local government to manage events in their local government area.

In an operational sense, this involves the need to establish a Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) for the local government area. The LDMG is chaired by an elected councillor to coordinate local strategic decision making. A council officer is appointed by the Chairperson of the LDMG to bring together council resources - and those of local public safety agencies - to effectively respond to events.

As part of these responsibilities, the LGAQ has encouraged councils to establish Local Disaster Coordination Centres (LDCCs) to operationalise LDMG decisions, as well as plan and implement strategies and activities on behalf of the LDMG during disaster operations.

The LDCC have the capability to coordinate local resources and information and pass information and requests to the District Disaster Coordination Centre (DDCC).

Hence the movement of data between the DDCC, LDCC and LDMG is important to ensure correct and timely decisions involving the allocation of resources and support are made and implemented to ensure the impacts of events are minimised and the recovery process maximised.

Local government provides first-hand knowledge and understanding of social, economic, infrastructure and environmental issues within their respective communities and are ideally placed to support their community before, during and after disaster events.

To date, through the leadership role of the LGAQ, councils in Queensland are able to access WPSS which prioritises voice calls on congested mobile phone base stations. This required permission from the Federal Attorney General's Office and a number of licences were allocated to the LGAQ, which provides an administration role of the WPSS program to all Queensland councils.

It is recognised that while voice has played a traditional role in disaster management, the need to have services that recognise the evolutionary nature of technology is also important. The role data will play in decision making is fundamental in this evolution of telecommunication services. The LGAQ is aware of technologies that will facilitate the prioritisation of data on a congested mobile phone base stations, and believes that access to Queensland councils would be an important tool in meeting their statutory responsibilities.

In a more general sense, councils also play a governance role in ensuring their region is safe, which includes providing and maintaining a broad range of services that do not harm citizens, as well as enforcing various Federal, State and local legislation and bylaws that aim to prevent unsafe practices from other third parties.

For these reasons, in particular the recognition of council statutory responsibilities through the Disaster Manager Act, it is important for councils to access the mobile broadband services that form the basis of the Productivity Commission's Report.

For more information in regards to this submission please contact, Mr Greg Hoffman PSM, General Manager – Advocacy

Yours sincerely

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