



Auditor-General for Australia



3 May 2019

Mr Stephen Jones MP
Shadow Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government
Shadow Minister for Regional Communications
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

By email: stephen.jones.mp@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Jones

Thank you for your letter of 7 April 2019 requesting that I commence an audit of the Mobile Black Spot Program, with particular attention to the identification of the site for the mobile base station near Kingstown for Commonwealth funding.

In your letter you acknowledge that a further audit of the Mobile Black Spot Program is listed on the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO's) Annual Audit Work Program as a potential audit topic. As you would appreciate there are many demands on the ANAO and any decision to commence audit activity is taken in the context of a range of factors including: risk, impact, importance, materiality, auditability, and previous coverage.

I draw your attention to statements made about the base station construction near Kingstown by officials from the Department of Communications and the Arts (DoCA) during the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee Senate Estimates proceedings on 9 April 2019. Following your request, my office sought further information from the DoCA on the process to determine the location of the base station and the extent to which the owner of the location is considered during grant decision-making.

Based on the information provided by the DoCA, there is no indication that property ownership was part of the assessment or decision-making process used to determine the successful applicant to construct the base station near Kingstown. Furthermore, I note that the two proposals submitted for the base station construction near Kingstown had identified the same property as the location in their proposals, and were in relatively close proximity to each other.

On this basis, I do not propose to commence an audit of the matters you raised at this time. The ANAO will continue to monitor ongoing policy developments across a range of portfolios, including communications, as part of the development of the Annual Audit Work Program 2019-20. This program is scheduled to be published on the ANAO website in early July 2019.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grant Hehir". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Grant Hehir
Auditor-General