



In reply please quote

Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART)
Dr Peter J Boxall AO, Chair
PO Box Q290
QVB Post Office NSW 1230

15 February 2012

Dear Dr Boxall,

BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY - SUBMISSION TO THE IPART REVIEW OF RENTAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMUNICATION TOWERS ON CROWN LAND

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the IPART review of Rental Arrangements for Communication Towers on Crown Land announced in December 2012.

The Bureau of Meteorology (the Bureau) welcomes the introduction of a single Head Licence Agreement for occupation of Crown Land. As our land use is not for communication purposes the Bureau is seeking an exemption from rental charges that apply to Crown land communication sites as we are not telecommunications organisation and use these locations to site meteorological equipment.

The Bureau's meteorological equipment is dedicated to the collection of weather and river data that enables the Bureau to deliver on its statutory responsibilities under the *Meteorology Act 1955* and *Water Act 2007*. In addition to routine public weather services, the Bureau also provides essential information to the emergency services sector. Provision of this essential information depends on the Bureau having observational equipment in the most appropriate locations.

The information collected from these sites is critical for the forecast of weather conditions, in particular during severe weather events such as fire and flood. Bureau equipment, comprising flood monitoring repeater stations or Automatic Weather Stations and in some cases Radars, shares state government sites for mutual benefit. As such the Bureau's operations on these sites are not a communication facility, are not commercial, and should not be considered as being for the purposes of communication.

Due to the national interest implications, information collected from these sites is provided as a public good. The data collected and services provided are made directly and freely available to the public and Emergency Services in near real-time via the Bureau's website and other media.

The Bureau has meteorological equipment located across Australia at over 800 sites and rain gauges on over 9000 sites. It has been our consistent experience that on the majority of sites owned or operated by government, whether federal, state or local, that peppercorn or minimal cost leases are in place for Bureau of Meteorology equipment. This is in recognition of the essential services that depend on Bureau data and the local economic and social benefits derived from 24/7 access to observations data that is made freely available. Land is regularly offered, at no cost, to encourage the installation of meteorological equipment due

to the benefits that flow from the provision of local data. In a number of jurisdictions agreements have recently been established to increase observational equipment through state government funded and Bureau maintained and monitored automatic weather stations.

The Bureau, as a provider of free public weather information, continually seeks to manage costs and it has removed equipment from sites where lease or rental costs exceed affordable levels. Removal of equipment is not an option the Bureau of Meteorology welcomes as it may lead to a reduction in data collection and reductions or gaps in essential services.

The Bureau of Meteorology's current infrastructure on Crown land services several medium to heavily populated areas across NSW. In addition to weather forecasting, this equipment also records climate data that is useful for understanding, measuring and predicting climate change, and is of increasing value in local and state planning as the number and severity of extreme weather events increases.

It is understood that Lands is required to charge a minimum rent for all occupations of Crown land. This is the case in a number of jurisdictions and the Bureau has welcomed the offer of peppercorn or minimal leases to meet this requirement. In the event the Bureau was identified as being subject to charging increases under the new arrangements it would seek to have these waived or rebated.

To assist IPART Review in its deliberations on the above, please find attached (Attachment 1) an overview of Bureau equipment.

The Bureau appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Review of Rental Arrangements for Communication Towers on Crown Land. If you have any queries please contact Michael Whitehead Manager Corporate Real Estate (m.whitehead@bom.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,



Vicki Middleton
Deputy Director Corporate
Bureau of Meteorology

Bureau of Meteorology Meteorological Equipment

The Bureau's meteorological infrastructure is used to collect a range of meteorological and river height data that is essential for the provision of forecast and flood warning services to State Emergency Service and/or Councils.

Hydrological Equipment

The hydrological equipment includes rain and river height gauges used to collect rainfall data and river height data to assist in the provision of flood warning services. This information is used by the State Emergency Services and communities to respond to flood threats that risk life and property.

Automatic Weather Stations (AWS)

AWS's measure a range of meteorological data including rainfall, temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and direction at frequent intervals between 1 minute and 1 hour, 24 hours per day, every day. This information directly inputs to modelling that enables the Bureau to provide timely and accurate severe weather warnings, and basic forecasts to affected areas.

Communication Repeater Stations

The Bureau's Repeater Stations, which are generally just whip antennae, relay rainfall, river height and meteorological data from a number of sites, directly back to the Bureau's NSW Regional Office to inform forecasts, flood and warning services to the community, government agencies and Emergency Services to minimise loss of life and property.

Weather Watch Radars

Weather Watch Radars provide remote sensing of rainfall, and at some sites wind velocity over a large area of 200km+ radius, continuously 24/7 at either 6 or 10 minutes. Similar to all other Bureau infrastructure this infrastructure provides input to our severe weather warnings and weather forecast services to the community and Emergency Services.

