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**MINISTER FOR BROADBAND, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY  
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Mr Andrew Wilkie MP  
GPO Box 32  
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Dear Mr <sup>Andrew</sup> Wilkie

**The World Health Organisation's classification of radiofrequency electromagnetic energy**

Thank you for your letter dated 7 December 2012 concerning the classification of radiofrequency electromagnetic energy (EME) by the World Health Organisation's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). I apologise for the delay in responding.

My department has sought further information from the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) about this matter.

As you are aware, ARPANSA, within the Health and Ageing portfolio, sets public health standards for exposure to EME. The relevant ARPANSA standard is the *Radiation Protection Standard for Maximum Exposure Levels to Radiofrequency Fields – 3kHz to 300GHz (2002)* (the ARPANSA Standard). The ARPANSA Standard specifies limits of human exposure to radiofrequency fields in the 3kHz – 300GHz range to prevent known adverse health effects.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) requires all radiocommunications transmitters in Australia, including WiFi devices, mobile phone handsets, mobile phone and other wireless base stations, to comply with the exposure limits set out in the ARPANSA Standard.

The Australian Government has not directed ARPANSA to amend the ARPANSA Standard in light of the IARC's decision.

As you know, in May 2011, the IARC classified EME associated with wireless phone handset use as 'possibly carcinogenic'. The IARC classification was based on limited evidence of an association between radiofrequency EME emitted from wireless phone handsets with cancer in humans and experimental animals, but insufficient evidence of the mechanisms of carcinogenesis.

The IARC's decision was based on limited evidence of increased health risks amongst heavy users of wireless phone handsets. It should be noted that this evidence only related to the use of wireless phone handsets. The IARC found there was inadequate evidence to draw conclusions about other sources of exposure to radiofrequency EME, including from wireless base stations.

The ARPANSA exposure limits are set well below the level at which adverse health effects are known to occur, including possible effects from exposure to EME from mobile phone handsets. The ARPANSA Standard is based upon international best practice and is consistent with guidelines published by the International Commission for Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) which have been adopted by many countries. The ICNIRP website at [www.icnirp.org/documents/StatementEMF.pdf](http://www.icnirp.org/documents/StatementEMF.pdf) has a copy of this statement.

ARPANSA maintains continual oversight of emerging research into the potential health effects of EME emissions in order to provide accurate and up-to-date advice to the government and the Australian people. ARPANSA is currently reviewing scientific research since the ARPANSA Standard was prepared. This review will inform the decision on whether the Standard should be updated or the limits changed.

Should scientific evidence indicate that the current ARPANSA Standard does not adequately protect the health of Australians, the government would take immediate action to rectify the situation.

Further information on the ARPANSA Standard and ARPANSA advice is available from its website at [www.arpansa.gov.au](http://www.arpansa.gov.au).

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Conroy  
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Communications and the Digital Economy