

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE HEARING
AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

Question No. 1

Senator Fisher asked the following question in writing following the hearing on 8 August 2011:

What are the limitations of the narrow 400Mhz band which is currently used for communication purposes? Is it correct that radio networks using this spectrum require numerous transmitter and repeater sites that are both costly and present more points of potential failure in a major disaster scenario?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

All Telecommunications Networks require transmitters and repeaters of some form, which operate on different frequencies.

The 400Mhz narrow band system is used for voice and low speed data only. Only one person can talk at one time on one channel. Public Safety Agencies (PSA) use the 400Mhz to provide voice communications networks including during disaster response.

The capacity of the 400 Mhz is such that in areas of high population such as the Sydney Metropolitan area it is limited by a lack of available channels that can be used by the PSA's. This may cause a lack of channels being available to provide both business as usual communications and the communications required during a disaster.

The repeater sites used for 400 Mhz radio communications are generally less expensive than those used for mobile telephones, and less are required to provide the same coverage. With less sites in a 400 Mhz system, there are less points of failure.

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Question No 2

Senator Fisher asked the following question in writing following the hearing on 8 August 2011:

Are there any alternatives to that of accessing 20Mhz of the 126Mhz digital dividend (to be auctioned off after digital TV switchover) would enable your members to access the same type of services envisaged through the use of the intended 700Mhz spectrum band? For example, could processes such as uploading video and high resolution maps be achieved via a high level wireless internet service, rather than utilising the radio spectrum space?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Australian Government has advised Public Safety Agencies (PSA) that there will be no allocation of spectrum made available for Public Protection Disaster Recovery (PPDR) within the 700 Mhz digital dividend. Instead, a steering committee has been formed to advise Government on the possible size, use, and implementation of broadband mobile networks within an expanded 800 Mhz data services allocation.

A broadband mobile data network that would provide a high level wireless internet service built to sufficient size to satisfy the access to services required by PSA's, would require the same amount of the radio spectrum space as has been proposed for a "private" PSA network.

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Question No. 3

Senator Fisher asked the following question in writing following the hearing on 8 August 2011:

Would the provision of the proposed 20Mhz enable you to make savings relative to the costs currently incurred by the Police Force in the execution of its duties?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

It is not expected that cost savings could be made over present operating costs. Instead, the AFP would have access to a wider range of information (mapping, voice, data, imagery, metadata) that would enable those in roles relating to coordination and management of resources required at an incident, to make timely decisions that can lead to a reduction in cost, possible injury and loss of life, and improved Occupational Health and Safety conditions for Police and members of other Public Safety Agencies.