

Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network

Answers to Questions on Notice

Committee Hearing 4 November 2020

NBN Co Limited

Question No: 2

Division: Joint Standing Committee on the National Broadband Network

Hearing name: Business case for the NBN and the experience of small businesses

Topic: Peak time traffic decline

Question type: Hansard Ref: Page 9, 04/11/2020

Senator Don Farrell asked:

Senator FARRELL: Thank you for that answer. The 30 October snapshot for data traffic over the network appears to show a noticeable decline in traffic between 8 am and 5 pm. What do you think was driving that, and is it an indication that more people are returning to work?

Mr Rue: Acknowledging the request that we answer questions quickly, let me try and answer quickly. We obviously saw big spikes in traffic during the day as schoolchildren were being educated from home and as more people worked from home. We saw a very significant increase in download during the day but even more in upload. To your point, that settled down when we saw more children returning to school and when we saw people returning—well, it wasn't that many, but we saw some movement of people going back into office buildings. It's interesting: the data on our network—which our partnership with CSIRO will help with—is showing changes in behaviour. The short answer to your question is that the movement does reflect both children studying at home and people returning, to some extent, to the office. We expected an element of that to settle down—there's no doubt about that—but it is still a big increase on where we were in February.

Senator FARRELL: How much?

Mr Rue: I don't have it exactly in front of me. We will come back with the answer to that. One of my team will tell you the answer to that.

Mr Williams: We're seeing an increase in business-hour traffic from pre-COVID baseline levels of 46 per cent. That's for business-hour traffic. For the evening busy hours it's 37 per cent above the baseline.

Mr Rue: That also reflects, though, an increase in the number of subscribers—

Mr Williams: That's right.

Mr Rue: so let us come back with what the actual usage-per-customer impact is, if I can get that. I think that is what you are asking me.

Senator FARRELL: Yes.

Mr Rue: One of the team in the background probably has that, and we will see if we can get it to you.

Senator FARRELL: Okay. So it is a combination of things then. It's the fact that so many more people have been home—kids and workers—but there's also been a significant increase in people taking up NBN because of that?

Mr Rue: The 46 per cent that Gavin read out is a function of us having more subscribers on our network since before COVID. Frankly, because of COVID, there was an increase at the time—an increase in the demand, if you like—in people signing up more quickly than perhaps they would normally have, but it's broadly just the growth of the network and the fact that we have been building out and people have been connecting in the normal way. That obviously leads to more traffic, because there are more people. What I think you are asking me is: on average what more is a person using now than they were previously? We'll take that on notice and get you that.

Answer:

Pre-Covid baseline (24 Feb – 1 March 2020) 9am to 5 pm usage:

Downstream: 105GB/m

Upstream: 8.5GB/m

Average Post-COVID (April to October 2020):

Downstream: 115GB/m

Upstream: 12.1GB/m

Peak Usage over time (April 2020):

Downstream: 132GB/m

Upstream 14.5GB/m

It is important to note that the above data considers ‘business’ hours only. The most significant increase to downstream usage was seen outside of these hours.

NBN Co observed a flux in ‘business’ hours downstream usage as state-based restrictions changed, while a significant uplift to upstream usage was observed - ~42% on average across the “COVID” period, with a peak in April of ~71%.