

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division/Agency: Communications Infrastructure

Inquiry: Availability and access to enabling communications infrastructure in Australia's external territories

Topic: Suitability of the Hawaiki submarine cable as a telecommunications link for Norfolk Island.

Proof Hansard Page: Written (25 February 2021)

Committee asked:

Advise on the suitability of the Hawaiki submarine cable as a telecommunications link for Norfolk Island.

Answer:

In 2016, the Norfolk Island Council requested \$15 million from the Commonwealth Government for a spur to connect the Hawaiki cable. On 24 October 2016, Senator Pauline Hanson wrote to Minister Fifield requesting the Commonwealth Government financially support or underwrite the cable. The Government did not proceed with those requests on the basis that:

- A viable business case was unable to be provided; and
- The Norfolk Island community, like many communities across regional Australia, was being served with a dedicated satellite beam by NBN Co's state of the art satellite service, Sky Muster.

The Government's policy is that all premises in Australia, regardless of how remote, should be able to receive a high quality broadband service. In the case of many parts of regional Australia, including the external territories, NBN Co is supplying high quality broadband services through the Sky Muster satellites. The capacity and areas that the satellites were to serve was part of the original design work undertaken by NBN Co in 2012, on what was then known as the "Long Term Satellite Solution", well before the Hawaiki cable was being built.

Since that time, NBN Co has delivered a substantial number of upgrades to the satellite service, including most recently the SkyMuster Plus service, which provides unmetered internet for all activities except video streaming and Virtual Private Network traffic.

Norfolk Island is serviced by satellite backhaul. Norfolk Telecom, the main provider of telecommunications services to Norfolk Island, runs primary and secondary satellite earth stations for the satellite backhaul service.

In January 2021, Norfolk Telecom's new 3G/4G mobile network went live. The Australian Government contributed \$3.54 million toward the project through the Building Better Regions Fund. The 3G/4G network boosts the quality of mobile data services across the island, offers broadband mobile data, and provides faster and more reliable internet connectivity.