



Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement

Inquiry into the spectrum for public safety mobile broadband

Attorney-General's Department Submission

14 June 2013

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The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience highlights the critical role of governments to ensure the most effective, well-coordinated response from our emergency services and volunteers when a disaster hits.

The scale and frequency of natural disasters, and their effects across Australia, requires state and territory-based first responders increasingly to work together to achieve the best possible public safety outcomes.

Currently, there is no resilient, priority-based mobile broadband capability available for mission critical communications. Australia's police, fire, ambulance and emergency services (public safety) agencies therefore seek access to a mobile broadband capability to enable their mission-critical communications requirements.

AGD supports Australia's public safety agencies as they develop a mobile broadband capability to enable their mission-critical communications requirements.

Mobile broadband will provide the underlying architecture to communicate increasingly complex information in real time. The types of applications that could be enabled with mobile broadband technology include:

- Database access and records upload
 - patient information checks, fingerprint scans, geospatial information systems (GIS) information, building plans and information, hazardous materials (Hazmat) inventories, medical records, weather information, internet access, patient triage, traffic advisories, E-ticketing, vehicle registration information, biometric data, licence plate reader, facial recognition and navigation
- Video
 - video camera, surveillance video, tactical video, ambulance patient video, public transit video, videoconferencing, news feed and peer to peer video
- Monitoring
 - wireless monitor, automatic vehicle location (AVL), personnel tracking, vital signs monitoring, automotive telemetry and electronic surveillance
- Collaborative Tools
 - electronic command board, Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) and Records Management Systems
- Messaging
 - SMS, MMS, Dispatching status updates and email.

In December 2009 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed *The National Framework to Improve Government Radiocommunications Interoperability* which will see nationally harmonised and interoperable government voice and data radio systems by 2020. As all jurisdictional governments agree that public safety agencies need such a capability the Attorney-General's Department has, with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, been leading a national consultation process to develop a nationally interoperable public safety mobile broadband (PSMB) capability.

The Attorney-General's Department has also been working with the states and territories through the Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee (ANZCTC) and the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) to pursue a range of important initiatives to improve public safety. PSMB is one of these initiatives.

The Public Safety Mobile Broadband Steering Committee

On 10 May 2011 in response to the February 2011 meeting of COAG the then Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management, the Hon Robert McClelland MP, and the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, held a roundtable meeting on the matter of PSMB. That roundtable involved representatives from Australia's public safety agencies, telecommunications carriers and vendors, and the Police Federation of Australia.

The key outcome of the roundtable was the establishment of the PSMB Steering Committee, comprising senior officials from all jurisdictions and co-chaired by Deputy Secretaries from the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) and the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE), to progress this work.

In addition to AGD and DBCDE, the PSMB Steering Committee is comprised of representatives of the following key national stakeholder groups, committees and agencies:

- COAG Senior Officials
- ANZCTC
- ANZEMC
- The Australia New Zealand Police Advisory Agency
- The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council
- The Council of Ambulance Authorities
- The National Coordinating Committee for Government Radiocommunications
- The Law Enforcement and Security Radio Spectrum Committee
- The National Security Radio Operations Coordination Group
- The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).

The PSMB Steering Committee's original Terms of Reference included the provision of a report to Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers on the most efficient and effective way for Australia's public safety agencies to obtain a reliable and robust mobile broadband capability that meets their operational requirements and the potential for radio-frequency in this regard.

The Terms of Reference also included working with the ACMA as part of its review of the 805 MHz to 890 MHz frequency range (the 800 MHz band), to identify a suitable amount of spectrum necessary to meet foreseeable operational needs.

Since June 2011 the PSMB Steering Committee has met on 17 occasions, either face-to-face in Canberra or via teleconference, and has provided reports to the Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management (SCPEM), both at its meetings and out-of-session.

The PSMB Steering Committee has made substantial progress to develop the capability. In 2011, and again in 2012, its members conducted forums and workshops in every state and territory involving central agencies and public safety agencies.

To focus on specific elements of a nationally interoperable PSMB capability the PSMB Steering Committee has commissioned or produced a range of reports to assist in its work, including on the following topics:

- Public Safety Mobile Broadband Demand Requirements
- Public Safety Mobile Broadband Delivery Models
- Public Safety Mobile Broadband Spectrum Quantum Calculation
- 700 MHz & 800 MHz PSMB Band Comparison
- National Implementation Plan (for the capability)
- Next steps for the implementation of the capability
- Potential governance arrangements for the capability.

The PSMB Steering Committee's Overflow Capability Sub-Group is currently consulting with industry to determine how overflow capacity from a PSMB network might be assured. This will be the PSMB Steering Committee's final report.

Spectrum for the Capability

On 29 October 2012 the former Attorney-General and Minister for Emergency Management, the Hon Nicola Roxon MP, wrote to SCPEM members advising that the ACMA had decided to reserve 10 MHz from the 800 MHz band for use by public safety agencies.

The Commonwealth's offer of spectrum to the states is conditional on a number of factors including:

- the capability being nationally interoperable
- the states funding all costs associated with designing, building, equipping, maintaining and operating the capability
- an agreement to provide reasonable access to state networks by relevant Commonwealth agencies.

The Commonwealth also offered the states 50 MHz of spectrum from the 4.9 GHz band, with no licence fees, to provide first responders with unprecedented opportunities to improve their high-speed mobile broadband emergency communications.

On 23 November 2012 SCPEM made an in-principle commitment to the PSMB capability and endorsed a high-level National Implementation Plan.

SCPEM also asked the PSMB Steering Committee to consider the adequacy of 10 MHz, how the public safety network would 'overflow' onto commercial networks (when required), and next steps to design and implement the system. A progress report to SCPEM on these matters was provided by the PSMB Steering Committee on 28 February 2013.

The States and Territories also provided a submission on 28 February 2013 outlining concerns about the adequacy of a 10 MHz allocation of spectrum to meet the needs of public safety agencies. The ACMA is considering the submission, together with the report of the Overflow Capability Sub-Group when completed, which will inform a final decision on allocation of spectrum.

Future Work

On 19 April 2013 COAG agreed the need to ensure public safety agencies have adequate capabilities to respond efficiently and effectively when disasters occur. COAG noted the joint submission from States and Territories regarding the need for an allocation of broadband spectrum that is sufficient to meet the needs of public safety agencies in all jurisdictions now and into the future.

COAG further noted that the ACMA is considering this further information which will inform a final decision on allocation of spectrum.

COAG agreed that it required further work, and advice, from senior officials on the establishment of an appropriate PSMB capability. This would include advice on the new governance framework for the development of the PSMB, and on ACMA's spectrum reservation for a PSMB network. This advice will follow consultation with SCPEM.