

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

**Committee Inquiries Question on Notice
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Shutdown of the 3G mobile network**

IQ24-000058

Division/Agency: DIV - Communications Services and Consumer

Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No. 54 (24 July 2024)

Topic: Black Spot program - Round 8 closing date

Glenn Sterle asked:

ACTING CHAIR: [...] I want you to take me through the Mobile Black Spot Program because we had some conflicting positions yesterday. I had contacted the minister's office. I know where it is but we need to just clarify it. How much funding has been allocated to the current round?

Mr Chisholm: The Mobile Black Spot Program is a program that invests in a range of telecommunications infrastructure upgrades to support coverage and competition across the country. It's supported by co-contributions from state governments, local governments and also the mobile operators. Rounds 1 to 7 of the program have resulted in a total investment of more than a billion dollars to deliver up to 1,400 new mobile base stations. The outcomes of round 7, the latest round, were announced by the minister in December last year.

ACTING CHAIR: Has that closed?

Mr Chisholm: Yes, and the outcomes of the combined grant opportunity for both the Mobile Black Spot Program and round 3 of the Regional Connectivity Program was \$170.2 million awarded for a total of 136 mobile and broadband solutions. This is all part of the government's broader \$1.1 billion Better Connectivity Plan for regional and rural Australia. Round 8 is expected to happen later this year. The minister has recently stated that there will be a round 8. It's expected to open, as I say, later this year. No figure has been announced in relation to that but it's very much alive and with an ongoing program of support.

ACTING CHAIR: Does that have a closing date of this year?

Mr Chisholm: It is expected to be opened this year but whether it closes this year, I'll have to double-check. The folk who work on that program are not with us today, so I would need to double-check that.

Answer:

Round 8 of the Mobile Black Spot Program is expected to open later in the year. It is anticipated the round will be open to industry to make applications for approximately 12 to 14 weeks.

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**Committee Inquiries Question on Notice
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IQ24-000059

Division/Agency: DIV - Communications Infrastructure

Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No. 55 (24 July 2024)

Topic: 2G network in the United States

Matthew Canavan asked:

CHAIR: So which provider in the US has still got 2G?

Ms Sparreboom: I'm not sure I'll be able to pronounce the name correctly—Viaros?

CHAIR: Have they got coverage around the whole country?

Ms Sparreboom: The information we've got is that it only covers 3.7 per cent of the country.

CHAIR: Is that in terms of its mobile phone coverage or is that its market share?

Ms Sparreboom: I would have to double-check that.

CHAIR: Okay, take that on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts understands that all major carriers in the US have shut down their 2G and 3G networks. This includes T-Mobile, AT&T, and Verizon. There are some minor carriers (such as Viaero and CellularOne) that may still provide some 2G service across the country. The department has reached out to its contacts in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to verify this information and will provide this information to the Committee once received.

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts

**Committee Inquiries Question on Notice
Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
Shutdown of the 3G mobile network**

IQ24-000060

Division/Agency: DIV - Communications Services and Consumer

Hansard Reference: Spoken, Page No. 55 - 56 (24 July 2024)

Topic: International 2G networks

Matthew Canavan asked:

CHAIR: Okay. My understanding is that T-Mobile, in particular, announced a number of delays to its shutdown of its 2G service. Originally it was going to be 2022. Was it only just shut off in April this year—is that right?

Ms Silleri: I was only meeting on the 3G service, not the 2G. I can't give you any information on that.

CHAIR: Right. Correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is the 2G network is still there; it can provide this switched calling, or whatever the technical term is, rather than LTE—is that correct? That's the point of my questions, that in the UK, at least until recently, they had 2G and/or 3G services. Am I wrong about that? Do you know what I mean? These phones that don't do LTE or VoLTE if you've got a 2G network available, you've still got emergency calls and potentially other calls that can access that network.

Mr Chisholm: We're not aware of the specifics of that point that you've made there. We just need to follow up on that and check for ourselves. But thanks for raising it.

CHAIR: Okay. Maybe if you could take it on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts understands that all major carriers in the US have shut down their 2G and 3G networks. This includes AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon. There are some minor carriers (such as Viaero and CellularOne) that may still provide some 2G services. The department has reached out to its contacts in the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to verify this information.

The department has also requested information from the FCC on their 2G arrangements, including for emergency calling.

Once 3G is switched off, mobile handsets will require 4G VoLTE emergency calling capability to contact Triple Zero.