House of Representatives Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Communications

Answers to House of Representatives Questions on Notice

Inquiry: Role and potential of the National Broadband Network

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 1

Hansard Ref: Senator Fletcher, page 55 of Hansard

Topic: Denmark Broadband Services

Senator Fletcher asked Abul Rizvi, A/g Secretary, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy:

Mr FLETCHER: You have cited Denmark as an exemplar in government services online. What is the mix of technologies used to deliver broadband in that country?

Mr Rizvi: I am not aware of the specific circumstances of Denmark. We are happy to take that on notice and come back to you.

Answer:

There are a range of technologies used to deliver broadband in Denmark. As reported on the OECD's Broadband Portal, as of December 2010, there were fixed line connections over DSL, cable and fibre and wireless broadband connections accessed by both smartphones and laptops. Fibre connections composed 12% of fixed line broadband connections.

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Inquiry: Role and potential of the National Broadband Network

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 2 & 3

Hansard Ref: Senator Fletcher, pages 56-57 of Hansard

Topic: ADSL2+ and HFC/ Broadband Speeds

Senator Fletcher asked Abul Rizvi, A/g Secretary, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy:

Mr FLETCHER: Thank you. The data you have about DSL is very interesting, and thank you for providing it. I do not recollect having seen that data before. I am looking at your chart at the top of page 91 about the distribution of premises within 4.5 kilometres of an ADSL2+ exchange and also your chart and text a couple of pages before where you say, 'approximately nine million premises in Australia ... could theoretically receive ADSL2+'. Am I right to think that that has not been published before? Perhaps I have missed it.

Mr Rizvi: I am not aware whether we have published it before but I think that graph would be based on data extracted from our mapping unit. I will check that out and confirm it.

Mr FLETCHER: You say 'approximately nine million premises ... could theoretically receive ADSL2+'. I presume one of the points you are making there is that that nine million then needs to be reduced by the number of premises that cannot get it because of the presence of DSL blockers such as pair gains. Is that right?

Mr Rizvi: That would be correct.

Mr FLETCHER: Have you also looked at what that number goes to if you include premises that are served by the two HFC networks?

Mr Rizvi: I would need to take that on notice. We can get our mapping unit to do further work on it.

Mr FLETCHER: I think it would be very useful. Obviously there is overlap between the two HFC networks themselves and then also with DSL but it would be very interesting to have the department's considered views as to the total number of premises that can be served by any one of those. You have also put in some useful material about different sorts of benchmarks. I am looking at the material on page 94 about bandwidth requirements. There are a couple of different models there depending on what it is you want to achieve from the menu of options that is available to the end user. Adding up the left-hand column, if we exclude HDTV and just include SDTV, we are looking at about 11 megabits per second. Could you get the mapping unit to look at the question of adding together ADSL2+ and those who are close enough to the exchange to get that speed plus those who could get that speed over HFC?

Mr Rizvi: We could certainly do that, Mr Fletcher. A question that arises in making that sort of comparison is that you have to look at how households who have access to much greater levels of capacity will behave. That is an extraordinarily difficult thing to forecast, as you can imagine. What we do know is that over the last 10 years the behaviour of households as broadband speeds and capacities have increased has dramatically changed. There was a time when you had one

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computer in the house, one person used it and you really only turned it on once or twice during the day. It was dial-up and you used it in a very limited way. Houses do not behave like that anymore.

Broadband Speeds
Mr FLETCHER: Accepting all of that, why that would be useful is that it gives us effectively a baseline: the state of the world today. Part of that state of the world is that a significant number of people can get speeds at whatever threshold you have set   whether you call it 3, 5, 9 or 11 megabits. We also know that at the core of the public policy problem here is that a lot of people do not get speeds at whatever threshold you set. I think it is a fair statement that the availability of data on this question has been surprisingly poor. That is why I was quite excited to see the numbers that you have there.
Mr Rizvi: We will see what we can put together but, as I said, there are numerous dimensions to that question and it really does depend on how you pose it.

Answer:

The Department has undertaken additional analysis since the original DBCDE submission to the House Committee. The results of this analysis have shown that the HFC data the Department has is over ten years old and only covers Telstra. As a result, it would be imprudent to provide a further analysis.

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Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 4

Hansard Ref: Senator Fletcher, page 57 of Hansard

Topic: New Zealand Broadband Policy

Senator Fletcher asked Abul Rizvi, A/g Secretary, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy:

Mr FLETCHER: I am interested in the department's views on the broadband policy process in New Zealand. We have recently seen an announcement that Crown Fibre Holdings is going to invest nearly $NZ1 billion in what will be the structurally separated former access network of Telecom. Does the department have any views on the strengths and weaknesses of that model compared to the model that we are pursuing in Australia?

Mr Rizvi: I think I would have to take that on notice. It is a fairly complicated question and we would need to get ourselves better across the circumstances of New Zealand. As you know, those circumstances are changing quite rapidly.

Answer:

It is not appropriate for the Department to express views on New Zealand's broadband policy. Every country has a different set of circumstances, which means their policy responses are likely to be different.

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