Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network

Answers to Questions on Notice

Public Hearing 30 October 2012

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

NBN Co Limited

Question No: 20

Hansard Ref: In writing
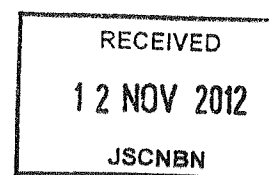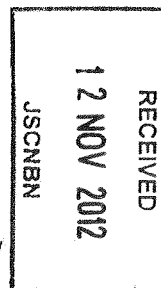
Topic: Build Drop Strategy

The Committee asked:

As stated in the Corporate Plan on page 13, what is involved in the 'build drop' strategy and how is it different in regard to process and cost in regard to the 'demand drop' approach?

Answer:

With a 'Build Drop' the connection from the street to the premises is carried out when the distribution and local segments of the fibre network are being built. 'Demand Drop' is when the connection from the street to the premises is installed when an order for a service is received from a retail service provider.

The 'Build Drop' strategy is expected to be more cost effective in the long run than performing 'Demand Drops', particularly in the context of the agreement with Telstra to disconnect its copper network. 'Build Drops' from the street to the premises for single dwelling units and multi-dwelling units are the most effective way to minimise mobilisation/de-mobilisation costs and to realise productivity improvements. It is more efficient to provide the drop that connects each premises from the street to the Premises Connection Device (PCD) on the outside of the premises, while the construction crews are in the area.

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Questions No: 26 & 27

Hansard Ref: In writing

@ 3.42 pm

Topic: Medical Alarms

The Committee asked:

26. The committee has received submissions from the Personal Emergency Response Services Association (PERSA) (submission 10) and Tunstall Healthcare (submission 8). Both groups have raised related issues about the UNI- V port service and battery backup for medical alarms.

27. It is understood that PERSA and Tunstall Healthcare have discussed these issues with NBN Co—what has been the outcome of these discussions?

Answer:

During 2011 NBN Co held complex services workshops with relevant industry stakeholders, including PERSA and Tunstall Healthcare, to assist in the design and development of the User Network Interface Voice (UNI-V) product so that it is fit for purpose to support a range of legacy services, including medical alarms.[1]

More recently, NBN Co met with PERSA in September 2012 to discuss how medical alarms will be supported over the NBN. Analogue medical alarms will be fully supported on the NBN via NBN Co's UNI-V port, which is supported by the backup battery.

Internet Protocol (IP) based medical alarms will also be supported by the NBN over the User Network Interface Data (UNI-D) product. NBN Co is currently developing battery backup functionality for the UNI-D. Once this is implemented, IP-based medical alarms will also be fully supported on the NBN.

NBN Co is also working to extend the run time of the battery for both the UNI-V and the UNI-D ports. Both the UNI-V and UNI-D ports have Traffic Class 1 functionality, meaning that the highest traffic priority over the network is available for medical alarms.

It is important to note that the effective operation of medical alarms—over the existing copper network and the NBN—requires more than technical functionality. All participants have a role to play to ensure that end users are given access to the services they need. Customers need to advise their retail service provider (RSP) of what services they require with their telecommunications service. Equally, RSPs need to give customers clear and consistent information about which services are supported so that end-users can choose the right service to meet their needs.

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[1] For more information on NBN Co's product components, see: http://www.nbnco.com.au/getting-connected/service-providers/product-components.html

The recent Communications Alliance Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code C628:2012 (TCP Code) has increased protections for consumers who have identified a particular need to their RSP. In particular, clause 4.1.4 covers what suppliers must do to meet consumer needs.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has the power to issue a specific direction requiring an RSP to comply with the TCP code. If an RSP has been directed to comply with the TCP Code and does not, the ACMA has powers to issue a formal warning, or commence proceedings in the Federal Court to issue an injunction or seek recovery of a pecuniary penalty from the RSP of up to $250,000 for each contravention of the TCP code.

NBN Co is convening an industry workshop with RSPs and PERSA members in November 2012 to discuss medical alarm support and help RSPs prepare. NBN Co is also keeping PERSA briefed on the implementation of the "must opt" battery backup policy.

Question No: 30

Hansard Ref: In writing

Topic: Medical Alarms

The Committee asked:

In terms of those RSPs that will be supporting medical alarms through a UNI-V port service, is NBN Co aware of concerns that there may still be unresolved medical alarm connectivity issues at the time of disconnecting or decommissioning the householder's copper service?

Answer:

Please see response to QoN 26.

Question No: 31

Hansard Ref: In writing

Topic: Medical Alarms

The Committee asked:

The NBN power supply unit and battery backup provides for approx 6-8 hours of runtime, whereas AS4607 standards for the provision of personal emergency alarms require a minimum of 36- 40 hours of battery run- time. Do you think that NBN Co should supply longer run-time battery backup options or allow after-market suppliers to connect their own, longer run- time, battery backup units?

Answer:

Please see response to QoN 26.

Question No: 32

Hansard Ref: In writing

Topic: Medical Alarms

The Committee asked:

At the public hearing on 9 October 2012, the Committee heard from Tunstall Healthcare that the NBN Co was seeking a legislative amendment to address this battery issue—can the department or NBN Co comment on this issue?

Answer:

NBN Co is implementing a battery backup model in line with Government policy. A legislative amendment is not required to make changes to the implementation of the battery backup deployment. Further detail on this matter is available in response to QoN 26.

Question No: 45

Hansard Ref: In writing

Topic: Fibre Network Extensions (NBN Co Corporate Plan page 32)
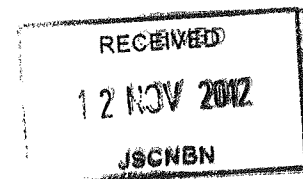
Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network asked:

How many applications have there been for fibre network extensions, and who is bearing the cost of these extensions?

Answer:

Since the launch of the Network Extension policy on 12 July 2012, 68 applications have been received to extend the footprint.

The policy states that NBN Co will recover the incremental cost of extending the fibre or fixed wireless footprint.

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Question No: 48

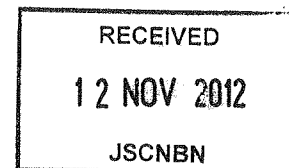**Hansard Ref: In writing**

Topic: Mobile Backhaul (NBN Co Corporate Plan page 68)

Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network asked:

Can you explain what type of technologies will be used in a mobile network; will this encompass internet access as well as mobile telephony?

Answer:

The mobile backhaul outlined on page 68 of the 2012-15 Corporate Plan would not see NBN Co constructing a mobile network. The proposal would allow the utilisation of NBN Co's fibre infrastructure for connectivity between mobile base stations and an operator's core network. NBN Co is considering these requests and evaluating whether to develop products suitable for use as mobile backhaul.

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Question No: 51

Hansard ref: In writing

Topic: Security and Disaster Recovery Plans

Joint Committee on the National Broadband Network asked:

On page 28 of the Corporate Plan, it states that business continuity; crisis management and disaster recovery plans have been created and will evolve.
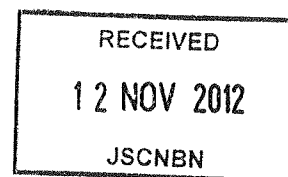
What do such plans take account of and how has risk been factored into these plans?

Answer:

Business Continuity Management planning encompasses the distinct phases of:

- Undertaking a Disruption Risk Assessment – i.e. to determine and evaluate the types of disruptions that could impact operations and to evaluate the risk level
- Production of a Business Impact Analysis, which details the impact on critical business process across NBN Co, evaluating the risk level, and the subsequent priority and resources required to resume operations
- Creating Plans, which document response strategies, resource requirements and contact lists, and
- Plans are then tested or rehearsed to ensure their effectiveness.

Risk is factored into Plans by linking with NBN Co's Enterprise-wide Risk Management Framework, with the risk appetite level being set by the Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

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