

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2014

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 68

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Broadband Quality and Availability Report

Senator Urquhart asked:

In reference to the *Broadband Quality and Availability Report* and the MyBroadband website;

- a. Has the Department been able to confirm the comments by Mr Turnbull on 4RO in April 2009 referred to in the hearing (Note: it was referred to in a media release by Minister Conroy on 4 June 2012)?
- b. Does the Minister's claim then that 3.5 Mbps enabled him to do everything he needs to do, and his claim now that 4.7 Mbps is inadequate, reflect the fact that expectation of broadband speeds continues to increase?
- c. What proportion of the areas with inadequate broadband will be able to achieve a 25 Mbps download by 2016?
- d. Can the Department explain the study published on the Delimiter website on 26 February that demonstrates that MyBroadband's median speeds are closer to upper range speeds?
- e. Can the Department explain why the MyBroadband website states that ADSL availability at CASE:17 is the highest availability rating while the Telstra Wholesale website states there are no available ports?

Answers:

- a. The focus of the Broadband Availability and Quality project was on describing the availability and quality of broadband services that could be expected based on the infrastructure present in each area. The analysis did not examine issues related to consumer demand or the adequacy of specific broadband services to support the requirements of individual consumers.
- b. The Broadband Availability and Quality project does not define any particular speed of broadband in terms of being adequate or inadequate; noting individual consumers will have different service requirements.
- c. The Government's Statement of Expectations, dated 27 March 2014, notes that NBN Co will prioritise areas identified as poorly served by the 'Broadband Availability and Quality Report' published by the Department of Communications in February 2014 (including any subsequent refinements arising from additional data) to the extent commercial and operationally feasible.
- d. As made clear in the MyBroadband report, the speeds on MyBroadband are estimated median peak ADSL speeds for an area.
The study referred to on the Delimiter website acknowledges a number of potential bias' that may have produced this result, including the inherent selection bias towards consumers with poorly performing services.
- e. The MyBroadband website is based on point-in-time analysis finalised in December 2013, at which point the Telstra wholesale website reported that spare ports were available at the Castlemaine exchange. As at 11 March 2014, the same report indicates there are no spare ports. The MyBroadband website will be periodically updated to include changes in broadband availability and quality.