

**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: 70**

**Program No. 1.2**

**Hansard Ref: In Writing**

**Topic: Vodafone Hutchison Australia network**

**Senator Urquhart asked:**

The answer to Question on Notice 45 indicates the Department has no knowledge of the population or geographic coverage of the Vodafone network. Is that correct?

- a. Is the data on coverage for the Telstra and Optus networks based on the simple details provided on their websites?
- b. The Broadband Availability and Quality Report was unclear on how the wireless coverage data was provided. What methodology was employed to identify 3G and 4G coverage? Was the Department provided with detailed maps in digital format by one or more providers to generate this data?
- c. Have you been provided with detailed maps of their voice coverage?
- d. On what basis will areas be determined as mobile blackspot for the purposes of the Mobile Coverage Program?
- e. On the basis of the answers to Questions on Notice 45 or other sources by how much, as a percentage of Australia's land mass, will the Mobile Coverage Program increase mobile coverage?
- f. What previous programs have been run to extend mobile coverage since 1992, how much did each program cost and what extra coverage was achieved by each program?

**Answer:**

Vodafone Hutchison Australia advised the Department that it does not publically measure national coverage by area or population reached. Vodafone advised that it provides a regularly updated online coverage map so consumers can check network coverage available in particular areas.

- a. No. Telstra and Optus provided information to the Department on the population and geographic coverage of their networks.
- b. Yes, the Department was provided with 3G and 4G network coverage data in a digital format from each of the mobile network operators.
- c. Yes, (refer above).
- d. The assessment criteria for the Mobile Coverage Programme are currently being finalised following the conclusion of the public consultation process on 28 February 2014.
- e. This information will not be available until the selection of the base stations is finalised.
- f. The Australian Government has invested in the following programmes to extend mobile coverage:

Networking the Nation

Funding of \$36.5 million was allocated to provide 267 mobile phone towers or repeaters in regional areas of Australia.

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##### Mobile Phones on Highways

Funding of \$25 million was made available to provide near-continuous mobile coverage along 9,425 kilometres of Australia's 16 major highways.

##### Regional Mobile Phone Programme

The programme comprised the following components:

- *Towns Under 500 Programme* – funding of \$20.4 million was made available to provide new or improved coverage to 55 towns with populations of less than 500 in regional Australia.
- *Selected Highways Programme* – funding of \$20.4 million was made available to provide coverage to 62 nominated lengths of 34 regional highways.
- *Wireless West Programme* – funding of \$7 million was made available to install 45 base stations in the south west of Western Australia.

##### Towns Over 500 Programme

Funding of \$22.8 million was made available to provide new or improved mobile coverage to 131 towns in regional Australia.

##### Extended Mobile Phone Coverage Programme

Funding of \$15.6 million was made available to provide new or improved mobile coverage to 62 locations in regional Australia.

##### Mobile Connect

Funding of \$8 million was made available to deliver new mobile coverage to 16 locations in regional Australia. No applications for funding were received.