

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

nbn

Question No: 85

nbn

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Topic: Preparatory work - fixed line roll-out on the west coast

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

Senator URQUHART: In relation to those preparatory works that you talked about, in the same response to question 126 you indicated that preparatory works were undertaken in preparation for a fixed line rollout on the west coast, but you would not divulge the cost. You said that was commercial in confidence. Can you outline what work was undertaken towards a rollout that the government is now failing to deliver to the people of the west coast. What sort of work was done?

Mr Morrow: It is a high-level recollection. If the senator would like more detail, I am happy to take it on notice to go back to the teams back at the company. I know you represent Tasmania very well, Senator, and have a great deal of concern for them. What I found when I asked the question was that, while it was intended to be a fixed line footprint area, as soon as they started to go into the design works to get a little bit more detail they realised that it did not have adequate facilities already extending out there. The cost of doing that was –

Senator URQUHART: Sorry, I do not want to cut you off, Mr Morrow, but what are the facilities that you are talking about?

Mr Morrow: In order to cover any area of the country that has a remoteness to it, you have to have fibre facilities going out into these areas and you typically need diverse fibre paths so that you can keep that service to a degree of reliability. Because of the distance involved in getting this geography of Tasmania, there is only one fibre facility that is owned by a different company or entity and that, even if we were able to get to use that, would only provide a simplex or a lack of redundant backfall facility. That would be unacceptable for people to run a business, to run a home and to depend on that service, because failures do occur. So if we were to put in a second or a redundant path on there, that is what would drive the cost per premise up to a point where it became much more economically feasible to use the satellite service.

Answer:

The preparatory works included:

1. nbn engaging with Transend (now merged into TasNetworks) to determine the lease cost of transit fibres from the existing nbn backbone network at Railton. This included the drafting of a pricing schedule and lease agreement with Transend;
2. Securing confirmation from Telstra that it had no transit fibres available for lease; and
3. Obtaining exchange handover from Telstra for Zeehan, Rosebery and Queenstown exchanges.