

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates May 2017

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 17

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 50-51, 24/05/2017

Topic: Regional Broadband Scheme levy – instigation date

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

Senator URQUHART: Can I confirm that this process was first instigated in May 2015 when Malcolm Turnbull was the communications minister? Is that correct? If it is not, then when was it introduced?

Mr Robinson: The background of this includes the Vertigan panel review of regulatory arrangements.

Senator URQUHART: When was it first instigated? If it was not in that period, when was it?

Mr Robinson: I believe there was a government policy statement on regulatory matters released at the end of 2014.

Senator URQUHART: At the end of 2014 there were some regulatory statements published?

Mr Robinson: There was a policy paper released, which was really the government's response to the Vertigan panel work, and then there was a process undertaken about consultation on the regional broadband scheme.

Senator URQUHART: When did the process start?

Mr Robinson: I would have to take that on notice for precise dates.

Senator URQUHART: I do not need precise dates. I said May 2015. Is that correct?

Mr Robinson: I do not know what that date refers to. There was work happening right across that period, including—

Senator URQUHART: You do not know what May refers to, but can you tell me when that process was first instigated?

Mr Robinson: Which process?

Senator URQUHART: The process in May 2015. The process around this draft legislation.

Senator Fifield: The exposure draft legislation, from memory, came out in December 2016.

Mr Robinson: Yes, that is correct.

Senator Fifield: That is when the exposure draft legislation came out.

Senator URQUHART: That is the exposure draft?

Senator Fifield: Yes.

Senator URQUHART: But when was it first instigated?

Mr Madsen: As Mr Robinson has indicated, the need for a sustainable funding mechanism for NBN's fixed wireless and satellite services was first identified when the government responded to the Vertigan review in December 2014 and it published a policy statement called the Telecommunications Regulatory and Structural Reform paper. Since that time there have been two rounds of consultation by the department's Bureau of Communications Research, which looked at the cost of maintaining NBN's satellite and fixed wireless services and what options were available for finding a funding source for those networks.

Senator URQUHART: So, May 2015 is when the government released its paper on funding options for a broadband tax?

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Mr Madsen: I would have to check the date, but if that is one of the papers that was released by the Bureau of Communications Research that could be the case.

Answer:

The Bureau of Communication and Arts Research released its first consultation paper on *NBN non-commercial services funding options* in May 2015.