

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: 4

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 8-9, 25/05/2017

Topic: New Branch

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked:

Senator O'NEILL: The minister indicated that the department has established a new branch focused on specifically on broadband consumer issues, but that new branch does not seem to be shown on the organisational chart that was provided in QON 310. Could you run through the functions of the consumer branch?

Ms Balzary: The new consumer branch was established in the restructure that Mr Robinson referred to earlier a couple of months ago. Essentially we wanted to make sure that we have a specific area of the department that is focusing on consumer issues across the NBN and working alongside our NBN shareholder relationship branch and ensuring that we are across consumer issues as they arise. Essentially the branch has been formed from the team that was previously working on issues relating to specifically migration issues on the NBN, and we are also developing—

Senator O'NEILL: How many people were in that branch?

Ms Balzary: There were 15.

Senator O'NEILL: I might get you to provide also a graphic of this if you can, following on. But just quickly take me through it.

...

Ms Balzary: We have freed up resources—we are probably looking at about three or four focusing on that side of the work and then we need to look in the longer term at what the scope of the work might be, and therefore we might consider in the longer term how we further resource that. It is an absolute priority for us.

Senator O'NEILL: I would really like to get a specific understanding of what each of these ones are. We are here for a long time today, so if you could give me a much more fleshed out version than is available about what is going on in each of those sections, that would be very important. Also, could I just go to the minister's speech on 10 April with regard to the restructure. Again, to clarify whether the branches and associated functions were actually within the infrastructure group previously—I want to see what is new, what has changed, what has actually changed in terms of purpose and also what additional resources have been allocated, because currently the experience of consumers is completely frustration.

Ms Balzary: Essentially what we have done is there were two branches that previously had some consumer responsibility sitting in what was previously a consumer division. Acknowledging that there is a significant focus on NBN related consumer issues, what we have done is move those two branches into be aligned with our NBN implementation branch that manages the shareholder relationship with NBN and also our regional branch. So all of the branches in my division have some responsibility for consumer related issues. We feel that that is a better alignment of those functions.

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

Answer:

The Department has restructured to align areas responsible for the National Broadband Network (NBN), regional broadband, NBN migration, and consumer protection with a dedicated branch to focus on consumer broadband services.

The Consumer Broadband Services branch provides advice on key issues impacting the NBN customer experience, and possible actions by industry and government to address this.

The Consumer Broadband Services branch has three teams looking at strategic policy, communication and reporting, and migration issues relevant to the NBN customer experience.