

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2014

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 10

Program No. 1.1

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Topic: NBN Co Shared Arrangements

Senator CANAVAN asked:

Senator CANAVAN: I am not sure if it was in the discussion paper or somewhere else, but I remember reading that the NBN Co has the ability to enter into shared access arrangements with MNOs currently to piggyback off their fixed wireless network, and vice versa apparently. Has that happened? To what extent has that occurred? Are MNOs using NBN Co infrastructure at the moment?

Mr Robinson: I know there are negotiations in place and that NBN Co can do that. Perhaps I should take on notice if there are actual examples of it, but I know there are certainly negotiations to that effect.

Senator CANAVAN: If a local community or local government wanted to try and take advantage of that, what is the best way? Do they just approach NBN Co?

Mr Robinson: They can approach NBN Co, who I think actually have a nominated person to consider approaches, and we can certainly provide that information as well.

Answer:

Yes, NBN Co has shared access arrangements with other Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) and infrastructure providers. This arrangement (known as ‘co-locating’) applies at approximately 40 per cent of NBN Co fixed wireless sites.

NBN Co’s infrastructure is available to other carriers to co-locate with them. NBN Co has received 39 applications and enquiries to date from MNOs and state based safety network operators. Thirty one of these applications are in progress. More than half of these sites are yet to commence construction.

Sixty per cent of NBN Co sites are greenfields as there was no co-location option available.

NBN Co is also in the early stages of “co-building” sites with Optus. This is where a new site being designed with both carriers’ current and future equipment requirements are taken into consideration. NBN Co expects to have 100 sites collaboratively constructed and shared.

In terms of the Mobile Black Spot Programme, the Guidelines encourage potential applicants and NBN Co to identify opportunities to use NBN infrastructure or co-contribute to new infrastructure to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. This could include locations where NBN Co has already built, acquired land, or has plans for a fixed wireless base station that would reduce the cost of deploying a base station in an area that has been identified as lacking adequate mobile coverage.

NBN Co has been working with mobile network operators to ascertain the extent to which NBN fixed wireless infrastructure can be utilised to improve mobile coverage through the programme.