Question No: 174

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: Page 54 (26/05/2011)

Topic: RC Filtering

Senator Birmingham asked:
Senator BIRMINGHAM: I am not quite sure you got to that stage. You had not quite got to the 'you can take it up or not' stage. I think you were still at the development stage and it never lasted beyond that. But the other options—the other blocking devices, filters et cetera—that exist in the marketplace overwhelmingly do more than what the mandatory filter would do as well.
Senator Conroy: I would have to take that on notice to give you an answer. You have asked a very specific technical question. You have asked me to characterise all of the other content management tools and make a judgment on them. I am happy to take that on notice.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: There are many of these products in the marketplace that the ISPs raised, presumably, with the department in saying, 'We don't need this new scheme.' There are many tools in the marketplace that can already be used by households or others to block the content that this now abandoned scheme would have blocked.
Mr Rizvi: I think the best way to consider it is to look at the other tools that are available. Those other tools do not determine for the customer what they will block. The customer chooses from a menu what they decide to block. To characterise them as blocking one thing or the other is not quite right.
Senator Conroy: We have a pamphlet we can send you, if you would like, which explains to parents what tools are available to them. That might help the discussion.

Answer:
Content management tools are summarised in the attached 'cybersafety tools' brochure which was released on the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy's website in May 2011.

Question No: 175

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: Page 55 (26/05/2011)

Topic: ISP Filtering Spending

Senator Birmingham asked:
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Yes, thank you, Minister. Of the $9.6 million budget, $200,000 was spent—is that correct?
Mr Rizvi: We might have to take that on notice. There was a very small amount of money spent, essentially in undertaking the design and the consultations and that side of things. But I would have to take on notice precisely how much was spent.

Answer:
Excluding corporate overheads, $190 679 was spent on the Voluntary Internet Filtering Grants Program in 2010-11.

Question No: 176

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: Page 62 (26/05/2011)

Topic: Number of NBN Coordinators, Cost and Locations

Senator Birmingham asked:
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Page 29. The department will employ regional National Broadband Network co-ordinators to encourage the take-up of broadband opportunities by local government communities and businesses. How many such co-ordinators, at what cost and in what locations are we looking at?
Mr Besgrove: I believe there is a total of eight. I would have to take on notice the questions of cost and the locations. I do not have that with me. But they are in a range of locations around Australia specifically related to the location of the Regional Backbone Blackspots program. Basically, where those initiatives are being undertaken is the sort of initial area of focus for those groups. But I would have to take the other elements of your question on notice. I do not have that information with me.

Answer:
There are eight Regional Broadband Coordinators in total, working with local communities to take full advantage of the opportunities of broadband along the Regional Backbone Blackspots Program routes. The Regional Backbone Blackspots Program covers approximately 6000 km, 100 regional locations and around 395,000 residents.

Coordinators are located along:
1. The Emerald, Longreach and Mt Isa (QLD) route which includes Barcaldine, Jericho and Bogantungan.

2. The Toowoomba to Arcadia route which includes Gunnewin, Roma, Chinchilla, Apunyal, Dalby and Oakey.

3. The Darwin to Queensland border route (NT) which includes Katherine and Tenant Creek.

4. The South West Gippsland route (VIC) which includes Wonthaggi, Inverloch, Korumburra, Leongatha, Koonwarra, Foster, Yarram, Woodside and Sale.

5. The Victor Harbour region route which includes Mt Barker, Strathalbyn, Goolwa, Port Elliot, Wilunga and McLaren Vale.

6. The Gawler to Renmark route which includes Tanunda, Angaston, Nuriootpa, Kapunda, Waikerie, Barmera and Berri.

7. The Shepparton, Mildura and Broken Hill route (NSW/VIC) which includes Robinvale, Swan Hill, Kerang, Cohuna, Torrumbarry, Echuca, Kyabram and Mooroopna; and

8. The Geraldton to Perth route (WA) which includes Bluff Point, Dongara and Port Denison.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2011

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

The 2009 Budget included an initiative to improve service delivery and promote broadband take up and use in regional, rural and remote communities. This initiative was to fund up to 12 Rural NBN Coordinators, now called Regional Broadband Coordinators, with funding of $5 million over four years.

Question No: 177

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: Page 62-63 (26/05/2011)

Topic: Measurement of Success

Senator Birmingham asked:
Senator BIRMINGHAM: How are you measuring the success of what these people are doing?
Mr Besgrove: It is a combination of activity in particular, numbers of groups that they are speaking to, ideas that are coming forward. Perhaps I could also take that on notice and come back to you with a more detailed answer.

Answer:
Regional Broadband Coordinators have agreed performance management plans with the Department to:

- increase community awareness and understanding of the Regional Backbone Blackspots Program and the opportunities of competitive broadband backhaul services;
- improve community understanding of the opportunities of broadband and engagement in the digital economy, including raising the awareness and understanding of the NBN;
- work closely with local organisations, particularly local councils, Regional Development Australia committees, Chambers of Commerce and community groups to promote broadband take up and use;
- collect and provide local information on broadband trends, community views, ways to improve effective communication with regional communities, and the benefits and opportunities arising from the new backbone infrastructure.

The activities of the eight coordinators are regularly monitored using:

- fortnightly reports detailing stakeholder meetings, locations visited, information provided and follow-up activity;
- regular case studies submitted from the local region on adoption of broadband by local businesses evidenced by new web presence or online commerce; and
- local stakeholder engagement plans.

Question No: 178

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: Page 63 (26/05/2011)

Topic: Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee Recommendations

Senator Birmingham asked:
Senator BIRMINGHAM: The Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee is rolling around to conduct another review by March 2012. Sadly, the funds that used to exist to support it have slightly vanished. When will the membership of the committee be announced?
Senator Conroy: The membership will be announced relatively soon.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Is that weeks or months?
Senator Conroy: I am involved in estimates this week and I have a fair bit of estimates next week as well, so we should finalise it very soon.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: So that committee will have at least nine months or so to do its job before having to report?
Senator Conroy: I look forward to them being very active and vibrant and getting around the country talking to people and making a report. I would hope at least nine months.
Mr Rizvi: They have to report by March.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: I have tried to give you a little bit of time to announce it.
Senator Conroy: We will hopefully be able to announce it soon.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: On the funding to support the work of that committee, what is dedicated to ensure that they can get around the country and do the job they are meant to do?
Mr Rizvi: We have been allocated funds for that committee to undertake its work.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Are you able to tell me how much that is or not?
Mr Rizvi: It is approximately $1 million.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: In terms of the ultimate government response to what this committee finds, Minister, can you remind me if there was an ongoing commitment from the government to fund activities out of the recommendations of this committee?
Senator Conroy: I think we spent $60 million or $70 million. The committee recommended that we wait to see how the NBN pans out in terms of expending the rest of the money. I think it was in the budget papers and I think I have quoted it to you in the past. But the money was set aside so that we could undertake it once the NBN world is a little clearer, which is slowly beginning to be the case. I will look forward to the recommendations and an update of those recommendations.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Are there funds set aside in the forward estimates for what may need to occur either in contingencies or elsewhere in relation to this committee?
Senator Conroy: I will happily take that on notice and come back to you to give you some more details on that.

Answer:
The *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* provides for independent reviews of regional telecommunications to be conducted by the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee.

The committee's 2011-12 inquiry report must be provided to the Government by 5 March 2012. The report is required to be tabled within 15 sitting days of its receipt, and the Government has six months in which to respond to the report.

Funding decisions in relation to any recommendations made by the 2011-12 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee will be made in the relevant budget context.

Question No: 179

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: Page 64 (26/05/2011)

Topic: Digital Business Online Website – Number of staff servicing the website

Senator Cameron asked:
CHAIR: How many staff are involved in servicing it?
Mr Windeyer: I would have to take on notice to give you a definitive answer. It is one of a number of things that are looked after by a section in the division.

Answer:
A range of staff contribute to the ongoing maintenance of the digitalbusiness.gov.au website on an as needs basis.

We estimate approximately 10 staff hours per week is spent updating the website and engaging in routine maintenance.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 180

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: NRS – Brisbane Office Inundation

Senator Fifield asked:
Has the Minister or Department made a formal response to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network report regarding the disruption to the National Relay Service in Brisbane for almost 24 hours on January 12? If so, what was the response?

Answer:
As at 6 June 2011, the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy had not responded to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network report, *The Queensland flood disaster: Access for people with disability to phone services and emergency warnings*.

Question No: 181

Program No. Program 1.2

Hansard Ref: Page 89 (26/05/2011)

Topic: Digital Regions Initiative Launch in Armidale

Senator Birmingham asked:
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Who ran the launch in Armidale the other day? Was that a department funded exercise or an NBN Co. funded exercise?
Senator Conroy: I think NBN Co. organised the morning launch.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: They picked up the tab for the sandwiches?
Senator Conroy: There was a separate function later in the day to do with our Digital Regions Initiative which the department was in charge of. But they were two separate and distinct events at different places.
Senator BIRMINGHAM: Mr Rizvi, if you could provide details of the costs and activities associated with that separate function that the minister just mentioned, that would be appreciated.
Mr Rizvi: We can provide that.

Answer:
The afternoon event in Armidale announced the EduONE - Education Our New England project. This project will develop and deliver high-quality vocational and adult education services using the National Broadband Network.

The Australian Government is co-funding this project through the National Partnership Agreement on the Digital Regions Initiative between the Australian Government, NSW TAFE - New England Institute, the University of New England and the Community Technology Centres Association.

The Department's financial contribution to assist with the cost of staging the event was $8,882.50 (GST inclusive).

Question No: 182

Program No. 1.2

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: NBN/Broadband

Senator Birmingham asked:
Has NSW Health and DBCDE come to agreement on the design and implementation plan for the Telehealth trial in Armidale and Kiama? How many participants will take part in the Telehealth trials in Armidale and Kiama?

Answer:
Yes, the Department has reached agreement with NSW Health on the overall design and implementation elements of the NSW telehealth trial.

Individuals aged 65 or older in Armidale and Kiama with chronic conditions (eg cardiovascular disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) participating in the New South Wales Government's Connecting Care Program and young people in Kiama needing mental health services will take part in the trial. Participation will be voluntary.

At this stage, it is expected that around 150 participants will be involved in the trial.