

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2013**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australian Communications and Media Authority**

**Question No: 152**

**Program No. Australian Communications and Media Authority**

**Hansard Ref: Page 55 (19/11/13)**

**Topic: Mass service disruptions**

**Senator Urquhart asked:**

There is a definition, though, I take it, for the natural disaster category?

**Mr Tanner:** I would expect there was, yes.

**Senator URQUHART:** Are you able to provide that to me?

**Mr Tanner:** Certainly.

**Senator URQUHART:** Thank you. Again, going through those notices, it appears to me that the vast majority are water related, so I am assuming that is either thunderstorms or heavy rainfall. Would that be correct?

**Mr Tanner:** I do not have a breakdown of the figures. I believe that is probably right, and we have come out of a fairly wet period—well, not in the last year but certainly prior to that. So I think rainfall is a large part of it.

**Senator URQUHART:** Are you able to provide some more-substantive information on that?

**Mr Tanner:** We can certainly give you more of a breakdown. I have some statistics here but I have not done that breaking-down exercise.

**Senator URQUHART:** That would be great. Thank you. Could you provide on notice too the percentage of mass service disruptions in 2013 that were due to thunderstorms, heavy rain or flash flooding—if you can break it down?

**Mr Tanner:** Sure.

**Senator URQUHART:** And the total number of services affected.

**Mr Tanner:** Yes. I certainly can give you those figures.

**Answer:**

**Definition of ‘natural disaster’**

The *Telecommunications (Customer Service Guarantee) Standard 2011* (CSG Standard) does not specifically define ‘natural disaster’ in the same way as it defines ‘extreme weather conditions’ (refer Schedule 3 of the CSG Standard). Therefore, any review of an exemption being sought on the basis of a natural disaster would be expected to seek a definition from common usage and relevant sources. For example, a definition through officials to the Council of Australian Governments in 2002 defined a natural disaster to be ‘a serious disruption to a community or region caused by the impact of a naturally occurring rapid onset event that threatens or causes death, injury or damage to property or the environment and which requires significant and coordinated multi-agency and community response. Such serious disruption can be caused by any one, or a combination, of the following natural hazards: bushfires; earthquakes; flood; storm; cyclone; storm surge; landslides; tsunamis; meteorite strikes; or tornado’.

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For the four Telstra exemptions (based on natural disasters) in the following tables, these relate to the NSW bushfires in October 2013 (one), the TAS bushfires in January 2013 (one) and the VIC bushfires (Gippsland and Epping) in January 2013 and February 2013 respectively. In each case, a natural disaster was declared by the relevant State.

#### Further information on the basis of exemptions (Mass Service Disruption) claims for the period from 1 July 2012 to 19 November 2013 and the estimated number of services affected

Table A provides details of Telstra's 52 Mass Service Disruption Notices (MSDNs) for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. Please note that a single extreme weather-related MSDN can refer to more than one of the nine criteria listed in Schedule 3 of the CSG Standard.

The **estimated number of services affected** (as shown in the tables) is based on the likely number of services affected over the duration of the exemption, as expected by Telstra at the time the MSDN is prepared.

Where an exemption is extended by the provider (either in duration or scope), this is not considered to be a new exemption.

**Table A**

Telstra MSDN Reason	No. of MSDNs	Estimated no. of services affected	*Referred to heavy rainfall	*Referred to lightning	*Referred to hazardous winds	*Referred to large hail	*Referred to flash flooding	*Referred to large waves	*Referred to storm tides	*Referred to bushfires
<b>Extreme Weather</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>628,800</b>	<b>34 (81%)</b>	<b>11 (26%)</b>	<b>28 (67%)</b>	<b>10 (24%)</b>	<b>13 (31%)</b>	<b>4 (10%)</b>	<b>4 (10%)</b>	
NSW	8	274,950	5 (63%)	1 (13%)	7 (88%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)	2 (25%)	1 (13%)	
NT	3	2,650	3 (100%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)		2 (67%)			
QLD	10	153,990	9 (90%)	1 (10%)	9 (90%)	3 (30%)	4 (40%)	1 (10%)	2 (20%)	
SA	3	21,950	3 (100%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)				
TAS	2	5,300	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)		1 (50%)			
VIC	5	92,950	4 (80%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)	2 (40%)			
WA	11	77,010	9 (82%)	4 (36%)	6 (55%)	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	
<b>Natural disaster</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2,850</b>								<b>3 (100%)</b>
TAS	1	2,000								1 (100%)
VIC	2	850								2 (100%)
<b>Need to move staff/equipment to affected area</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>66,500</b>								
NT	2	1,350								
SA	3	20,150								
VIC	1	45,000								
<b>Telecommunications facilities damaged by others</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>61,000</b>								
VIC	1	61,000								
<b>Grand Total for 2012-13</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>759,150</b>								

\*This represents the number (and percentage) of MSDNs that referred to that criterion. For example, across the 8 extreme weather MSDNs in NSW, heavy rainfall was referred to in 5 (63%) of those MSDNs and large hail was referred to in 2 (25%) of those MSDNs.

Note: No MSDNs referred to blizzard or tornado.

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Table B provides a breakdown of Telstra's 16 MSDNs for the period from 1 July 2013 to 19 November 2013.

**Table B**

Telstra MSDN Reason	No. of MSDNs	Estimated no. of services affected	*Referred to heavy rainfall	*Referred to lightning	*Referred to hazardous winds	*Referred to large hail	*Referred to flash flooding	*Referred to large waves	*Referred to storm tides	*Referred to bushfires
<b>Extreme Weather</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>123,050</b>	<b>11 (92%)</b>	<b>2 (17%)</b>	<b>10 (83%)</b>	<b>1 (8%)</b>	<b>4 (33%)</b>			
NSW	2	7,850	2 (100%)		2 (100%)	1 (50%)	2 (100%)			
SA	2	22,400	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)					
TAS	4	7,650	4 (100%)		4 (100%)		1 (25%)			
VIC	2	36,650	2 (100%)		2 (100%)					
WA	2	48,500	2 (100%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)		1 (50%)			
<b>Inability to obtain lawful access to land/facility</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>500</b>								
QLD	1	500								
<b>Natural disaster</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4,600</b>								<b>1 (100%)</b>
NSW	1	4,600								1 (100%)
<b>Need to move staff/equipment to affected area</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>400</b>								
NT	2	400								
<b>Grand Total for 1 July 2013 to 19 November 2013</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>128,550</b>								
*This represents the number (and percentage) of MSDNs that referred to that criterion. For example, across the 4 extreme weather MSDNs in TAS, heavy rainfall was referred to in 4 (100%) of those MSDNs and flash flooding was referred to in 1 (25%) of those MSDNs.										
Note: No MSDNs referred to blizzard or tornado.										