

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2013

Communications Portfolio

NBN Co Limited

Question No: 179

Program No. NBN Co

Hansard Ref: Pg 67-68 (19/11/13)

Topic: Copper Network

Senator Lundy asked:

So NBN Co. did not have a figure that said a percentage of the copper network is inaccessible?

Dr Switkowski: No, but I do not know either how one arrives at that figure or what that figure means. Here, I default back to my own history. The copper network has been working well for decades.

Senator LUNDY: With due respect, Dr Switkowski, I will come to that because I would like to explore those very issues with you in just a little bit of depth today and because I remember those conversations we had. Can I ask the minister how the coalition came up with the figure of 10 per cent of copper being inaccessible? It is figure that the coalition has used, so I want to put that to the minister, but I also want to put it to NBN Co. Does NBN Co. have any knowledge about where this 10 per cent figure came from, minister?

Senator Fifield: I will leave it to NBN to speak to their knowledge first.

Senator LUNDY: I do understand if you want to take it on notice.

Senator Fifield: Sure, but I thought I would give officers of NBN Co. the opportunity to speak to their knowledge.

Senator LUNDY: Dr Switkowski, is 10 per cent a number that has any bearing on any considerations of NBN Co. prior to starting your work on the strategic review?

Dr Switkowski: I do not understand the metric. What does 10 per cent of copper being inaccessible mean?

Senator LUNDY: I do not know; it was the coalition that said it, so I am asking you.

Dr Switkowski: I do not know.

Senator LUNDY: You do not know either.

Dr Switkowski: I do not think any of us know what that means at the moment without going back to the document.

Senator LUNDY: That just confirms what I thought: that it was a relatively meaningless figure.

Senator Fifield: No.

Senator LUNDY: Over to you, minister.

Senator Fifield: I think what it means is that officers of NBN Co. do not know the basis upon which that figure was calculated. I do not think you can draw from it that they have the same conclusion that you do, but I will take that on notice.

Senator LUNDY: You will take it on notice and source that figure for us, will you?

Senator Fifield: Yes.

Answer:

NBN Co is not aware of the source of the 10 per cent figure or the context in which it might have been used.