

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2013
Communications Portfolio
Department Communications

Question No: 187

Program No. Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 78 (19/11/2013)

Topic: Natural monopoly aspects

Senator Ludlam asked:

Okay. Is it your understanding that NBN Co. will retain the natural monopoly aspects that this parliament debated ad nauseam for a period of about two years, or are we going to see a period of infrastructure competition at the wholesale level?

Dr Switkowski: I consider that a policy question. That is a reasonable question to ask—

Senator LUDLAM: Thank you.

Dr Switkowski: but I have been given no instructions other than your introductory comments.

Senator LUDLAM: You have been pretty clear on the first two. On the third one, it is 'maybe'. You are not sure.

Dr Switkowski: It is unsure today. But I think it is a reasonable question that will be asked and debated. But it is a policy question for the government, really.

Senator LUDLAM: Senator Fifield, do you want to take that one?

Senator Fifield: I will take that on notice for Minister Turnbull.

Answer:

On 12 December 2013, the Australian Government appointed a Panel of Experts to conduct an independent cost-benefit analysis of the National Broadband Network and a review of the regulatory arrangements.

The purpose of the independent cost-benefit analysis and review of regulation is to analyse the economic and social costs and benefits (including both direct and indirect effects) arising from the availability of broadband of differing properties via various technologies, and to make recommendations on the role of Government support and a number of other longer-term industry matters.

The matter of infrastructure competition at the wholesale level would be considered in this context.

The review will report to Government within six months of its commencement.