

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2013

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 45

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: Pages 98 – 99 (19/11/13)

Topic: Infrastructure providers of mobile services

Senator Pratt asked:

How many infrastructure providers of mobile services are there in Australia?

Mr Heazlett: There are three providers of mobile services currently in Australia using their own infrastructure.

Senator PRATT: It is good to clarify that, because there are lots of people—

Mr Heazlett: Virtual mobile network operators.

Senator PRATT: Yes. What is the coverage of each of these networks, measured by population and land mass?

Mr Heazlett: We would have to take that on notice.

Senator PRATT: Please do. You are welcome to just comment on this generally: how much do these networks overlap, and in what areas specifically would there be coverage by Optus or Vodafone without coverage being provided by Telstra? In fact, I am very keen to know the answer to this, because getting coverage around the country is an issue.

Mr Heazlett: Without having all the precise detail in front of me, based on our experience there would be quite rare instances where Optus and Vodafone had coverage where Telstra did not. Typically, Optus coverage tends to be a subset of Telstra's and Vodafone's is a subset further of that.

Senator PRATT: How much has been invested in these mobile networks by the three operators?

Senator Birmingham: I imagine that is commercial information, Senator Pratt.

Mr Heazlett: To the extent we can identify it readily, we will take it on notice.

Answer:

Telstra has advised that its services currently cover 99.3 per cent of the population and 2.3 million square kilometres of the Australian land mass.

Optus has advised that its mobile network reaches 98.5 per cent of the population and currently covers over 1.3 million square kilometres of the Australian land mass.

Vodafone Hutchison Australia has advised that it does not publically measure coverage by population or area.

Detailed information is not available on how the networks overlap. All three carriers have publically available mobile coverage maps:

Telstra - www.telstra.com.au/mobile-phones/coverage-networks/our-coverage/

Optus - www.optus.com.au/network/mobile/coverage

Vodafone Hutchison Australia - www.vodafone.com.au/aboutvodafone/network/checker

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Telstra has advised that it has invested over \$4 billion to roll out its 3G and 4G network, and plans to spend a further \$1.2 billion in the 2014-15 financial year.

Optus has advised that since 2009, it has spent over \$2.25 billion on its mobile network, including expanding coverage and rolling out new technologies such as 4G and 4G Plus. Optus has advised that since 2010, it has built over 500 new sites in regional Australia and have plans to invest in further infrastructure.

Vodafone Hutchison Australia has advised that in the past year its network has grown by 40 per cent across Australia.