

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Budget Estimates Hearings February 2010
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 84

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Wireless Broadband

Senator Eggleston asked:

1. Has there been any consideration of wireless broadband, given its increased popularity? Should the objectives of the NBN be re-evaluated given the change of broadband access towards wireless?
2. Does the Department accept that South Korea has the best internet speeds and access in the world? Has the Department been working with the South Koreans? If not, why not? Are there any lessons for Australia to learn from the South Koreans?
3. What is the extent of availability of wireless broadband around Australia?
4. Does the Government have a view about whether wireless broadband services will reduce the demand for cable based broadband services?
5. Is the extension of wireless broadband being actively promoted by the Department?

Answer:

1. a) Yes. There are a number of processes underway that demonstrate that the Government is closely considering development of wireless broadband - see response to question 5 below.
b) No. Fibre to the premises is widely accepted as the optimal future proof technology with wireless broadband a complementary rather than a substitute technology.
2. a) The OECD's broadband portal¹ indicates that as at September 2008, South Korea was ranked:
 - o second in terms of average advertised broadband download speeds by country (80,800 kilobits per second ^{2,3})
 - o equal first (with Japan, Finland and France) in terms of broadband speed advertised by the incumbent telecommunication operator (100,000 megabits per second)⁴
 - o equal third (with Sweden, Iceland, France and Denmark) in terms of the advertised connection speed available among all surveyed operators, by country (100,000 kilobits per second)⁵

The OECD's broadband portal also indicates that as at June 2009, 46% of broadband subscribers in South Korea subscribed to fibre connections (includes fibre-to-the-home and fibre-to-the-building or apartment LAN connections).⁶

¹ http://www.oecd.org/document/54/0,3343,en_2649_34225_38690102_1_1_1_1.00.html

² The OECD notes that advertised speeds are typically the theoretical maximum for the employed technologies. Users commonly have lower speeds. Also, often only parts of country have been upgraded to allow for faster speeds.

³ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/53/39575086.xls>

⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/55/39575114.xls>

⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/36/39575235.xls>

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b) The Department has worked with the South Korean Government through the trilateral Korea-Australia-New Zealand (KANZ) Broadband Summits including sharing lessons and information.

c) While there are similarities in policies, there are distinctions in geographic and other physical infrastructure that will differentiate network deployment in each country. For example, South Korea is a highly urbanised country with a substantial number of multi-dwelling units.

3. Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) identifies that Telstra's 3G mobile network covers 99.06% of the population (Source: ACMA Communications Report 2008-09, p.21). Terrestrial mobile wireless services are provided by 287 service providers in selected metropolitan and regional areas.
4. Wireless and wired communications networks are interdependent. As referred to in response b) question 1, fibre to the premises is widely accepted as the optimal future proof technology with wireless broadband a complementary rather than a substitute technology. The Implementation Study report has indicated that while wireless networks will continue to be important, the growth in bandwidth hungry applications will make wireless services complementary to fibre rather than a substitute.
5. Promotion of wireless broadband services is primarily a commercial activity for wireless service providers. However, the Department and the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) have increased awareness of wireless broadband services through the digital dividend green paper process, the ACMA's discussion paper released as part of its review of the pricing, planning and licensing arrangements for the 2.5 GHz band, and consideration of key existing spectrum licences that are due to expire in the period between 2013 and 2017.

⁶ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/21/58/39574845.xls>

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Question No: 85

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Tasmanian Rollout

Senator Minchin asked:

- a) What stage is the Tasmanian roll out currently at, is cable being laid?
- b) What equity injections has NBN Co now made to Tasmanian NBN Co?
- c) It has been widely reported that the first stage of the Tasmanian roll out, to 5,000 homes will cost \$38 million, is this correct?
- d) On a per home basis, ZDNet reported that this would equate to around \$7,800 for each premise, how do you equate for the difference between these figures?
- e) There have been reports the overall Tasmanian roll out will cost between \$500 and \$700 million, is this correct?
- f) How much money is the Federal Government contributing to this project?
- g) Will the Federal contribution be capped or is the Government prepared to contribute 'whatever it takes'?
- h) What percentage of the first 5,000 homes will be connected via overhead cable?
- i) What local planning processes have been involved in gaining approval for overhead cable roll out?
- j) If take-up proves to be poor and suggests a state-wide roll in Tasmania simply will not be commercially viable, will the roll out proceed regardless?
- k) Is any thought being given to providing additional subsidies to encourage take-up in these areas?
- l) What analysis has been done to ascertain how many homes out of the 5,000 will choose to take-up the service?
- m) How will the entire mainland network be completed in eight years if it will take five years to complete the Tasmanian rollout?

Answer:

NBN Tasmania advises the following:

- a) The rollout is on schedule to provide services from July 2010 within the Stage 1 communities; Smithton, Scottsdale and Midway Point. The aerial cable deployment in Midway Point is complete with cable splicing and testing activity underway. Work on the cable deployment is well underway in Scottsdale and Smithton. All backhaul links are in place but subject to final testing and commissioning. The Network Operations Centre at Hobart and Point of Interconnect are undergoing final acceptance testing and commissioning.
- b) On 1 March 2010, the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy announced that an equity injection of \$100 million would be provided to NBN Tasmania through NBN Co to facilitate the rollout of Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the NBN in Tasmania. This equity injection has been received.

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- c) A Stage One rollout agreement valued at \$37 million was executed on 21 August 2009. However, the cost of the rollout in Tasmania to date includes the building of shared infrastructure like transmission links, the proof of concept centre and the network operations centre, that will serve many other communities in later stages of the roll-out. It is incorrect to attribute these shared costs to the Stage 1 communities alone .
- The cost of rolling out the NBN to the whole of Tasmania depends on many factors, including the finalisation of the rollout plan and network architecture, and the outcomes of competitive tender processes and other agreements. The Government intends achieving the best value for taxpayers money, and will let market processes run their course.
- d) See answer to (c).
- e) The cost of rolling out the NBN to the whole of Tasmania depends on many factors, including the finalisation of the rollout plan and network architecture, and the outcomes of competitive tender processes and other agreements. The Government intends achieving the best value for taxpayers money, and will let market processes run their course. Figures appearing in the media are speculation.
- Final costs for the rollout in Tasmania will not be known until competitive tender processes are completed by NBN Tasmania Limited for the future stages in the volume rollout..
- f) The Implementation Study estimates the capital cost of the NBN, including the rollout in Tasmania, to be in the range \$38 to \$43 billion.
- g) The Australian Government is committed to rolling out superfast Fibre-to-the-Premises broadband services to 200 000 premises capable of delivering speeds of 100 megabits per second. The remaining premises will receive next generation wireless and satellite technologies capable of delivering broadband speeds of 12 megabits per second. The Government expects to deliver the NBN project, which includes the Tasmania rollout, within the announced \$43 billion estimate.
- h) Aerial optic fibre cable is used for the backhaul extensions and approximately 85% of the Fibre-To-The-Premises (FTTP) within the three Stage 1 communities.
- i) The overhead cable rollout is being undertaken in accordance with the development application approval process of each local council and the requirements of the Tasmanian Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.
- j) The Commonwealth and Tasmanian Governments are committed to rolling out superfast FTTP broadband services to 200 000 Tasmanian premises. FTTP will be capable of delivering speeds of 100 megabits per second. The remaining Tasmanian premises will receive next generation wireless and satellite technologies capable of delivering broadband speeds of 12 megabits per second or more. NBN Tasmania will work with retail service

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providers to raise awareness of the network and the services that will be available to encourage take-up.

- k) NBN Tasmania is executing a communication plan to increase awareness of the NBN including the benefits it will bring to the community and encourage take-up rates in the Stage 1 communities. Furthermore, the retail service providers are expected in June to begin promoting the product offerings and prices that will be available from July 2010 using NBN infrastructure.
- l) The first stage rollout of the NBN in Tasmania is to be to communities that will benefit significantly because of the existing low penetration of broadband services in regional centres. Aurora selected the locations because broadband access in the Stage 1 communities was poor and the rollout would commence quickly leveraging existing infrastructure.
- m) The NBN will be rolled out progressively throughout Australia, beginning in Tasmania. As the project gathers momentum there will be greater progress made and solutions determined by experience in both Tasmania and the mainland will be used to accelerate the overall progress.

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Question No: 86

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Implementation Study

Senator Nick Minchin asked:

- a) What ongoing role is NBN Co having with the Implementation Study?
- b) It was reported last month (ZDNet 11 January), that an interim report was provided last August. Is this correct and how useful was it in relation to guiding the company's activities?

Answer:

- a) The Lead Adviser worked closely with NBN Co during the Implementation Study to build on each others work. NBN Co was also a member of the Steering Committee to oversee the Implementation Study.
- b) An interim report was provided to the Department in August 2009. It was preliminary in nature, but provided a useful early view of the key issues to be considered over the course of the Implementation Study.

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Question No: 87

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

Senator Mary Jo Fisher asked:

- a) In Senate Additional Estimates on Monday, 8 February 2010 Senator Conroy said he would “consider” whether he would publicly release the NBN implementation study?
- b) Is there a time frame or deadline on how that decision is made?
- c) When is the implementation study expected to be completed?
- d) When is the implementation study expected to be submitted to Senator Conroy?
- e) Will the Government publicly release the implementation study?
- f) At what stage of completion is the study currently?
- g) If it is not released in its entirety, will parts of it be released publicly?
- h) What has been the total expenditure on the implementation study? What was the budgeted expenditure
- i) What areas will be covered in the implementation study?
- j) It was reported last month (ZDNet 11 January), that an interim report was provided last August, is this correct?

Answer:

- a) to g) The National Broadband Network Implementation Study has been completed. The Study was provided to the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, the Hon Senator Stephen Conroy on Friday 5 March 2010 and the Government agreed to its release before the May 2010 Budget. The Government released the Implementation Study, in its entirety, on Thursday 6 May 2010 and announced a three week public consultation process with submissions due by 27 May 2010.
- h) Total Implementation Study expenditure (consultancies and Departmental expenses) to 30 April 2010 (excluding GST) is \$23,807,612. The 2009-10 annual budgeted expenditure is \$25,329,486.
- i) The Implementation Study examines the Government’s coverage, commerciality and competition objectives for the NBN as well as the detailed operating arrangements of NBN Co Limited, its ownership and structure, ways to attract private sector investment and the Government’s longer term privatisation objective.
- j) An interim report was provided to the Department in August 2009. It was preliminary in nature, but provided a useful early view of the key issues to be considered over the course of the Implementation Study.

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Question No: 88

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Terms of Engagement with Telstra

Senator Minchin asked:

Referring to the media statement the Minister issued on 18 December 2009 'Terms of engagement agreed between Telstra and NBN Co':

- a) Could a mainland roll out of the NBN conceivably take place before negotiations with Telstra are concluded?
- b) When does the Department expect negotiations to be concluded, in the first half of this year or not until after the next federal election?
- c) Does the Department agree NBN simply could not be built on a commercial basis if Telstra does not migrate its traffic onto it?
- d) Can you confirm that the Government will roll out the NBN nationally in the event that agreement cannot be reached with Telstra?

Answer:

- a) Yes.
- b) The negotiations are being conducted between NBN Co and Telstra. The Department can not speculate on the likely timeframe for the negotiations.
- c) No.
- d) Yes.

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Question No: 89

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Legislation Surrounding Telstra & NBN – Fixed Line/USO

Senator Minchin asked:

- a) Is the Government's clear preference for Telstra to no longer own or operate a fixed line network?
- b) If 10 per cent of the population, or 2.2 million people are served by wireless or satellite, who will be responsible for also delivering a fixed line service to them in the event that Telstra no longer operates a fixed line network?
- c) Is it possible that basic telephony will be delivered by wireless or satellite to people living in those parts of the country that will not get a fixed fibre connection under the NBN?

Answer:

- a) The Government's preferred outcome is for Telstra to voluntarily structurally separate. The Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2009 establishes a framework for Telstra to submit a voluntary undertaking to the ACCC. The Bill states that after a day specified in the undertaking, Telstra will not supply fixed-line carriage services to retail customers using a telecommunications network over which it is in a position to exercise control. The Minister by legislative instrument may exempt certain telecommunications networks or fixed-line carriage services from the structural separation undertaking, if appropriate to do so.
- b) The Government has indicated that all consumers who currently receive a standard telephone service through a variety of policy mechanisms will continue to receive this service. Under the current Universal Service Obligation, Telstra must provide reasonable access to a standard telephone service for all people in Australia, wherever they reside or carry on a business.
- c) The Government has indicated that all consumers who currently receive a standard telephone service through a variety of policy mechanisms will continue to receive this service. Under the current Universal Service Obligation, Telstra must provide reasonable access to a standard telephone service for all people in Australia, wherever they reside or carry on a business.

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Question No: 90

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Rupert Murdoch and NBN Investment

Senator Minchin asked:

In an interview with Terry McCrann in the Herald Sun on 6 November, Rupert Murdoch said the Government had to decide whether it would hold the NBN as a public utility or sell it to private enterprise. "If the latter, it could only happen if the Government was prepared to write off half the cost openly upfront. "To spend \$40 billion to build it; to be prepared to sell it for \$20 billion, so that investors buying it could have a chance of a return."

1. Has the Department considered or provided advice on these comments? Will the Government have to write off half the cost in order to give any future buyers a chance of a return?
2. Mr Rudd said back on April 7 that this project "should give a return over time to the Australian people?" Does that mean if the Government invests \$15 billion, that taxpayers will eventually get that back, plus a return on that investment?

Answer:

1. The Implementation Study, amongst other things, undertook detailed analysis on funding options for the NBN and how the Government could privatise the NBN in the future. This funding analysis, including detailed revenue and cost modelling, concludes that NBN Co will be able to develop a strong, commercial business case. And the Government can expect to earn a return on its investment. In particular, following the rollout, NBN Co will generate strong positive cash flows.
2. As a wholesale only network, it is expected that the NBN will earn a utility style rate of return rather than a rate of return traditionally earned by a vertically integrated telecommunications operator.

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Question No: 91

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: NBN Affordability/Pricing

Senator Minchin asked:

In October, Senator Conroy was widely reported as endorsing Optus analysis which suggests wholesale NBN pricing of between \$40 and \$70. He also mentioned speed offers ranging from 1 megabit through to 100 megabits.

Given the endorsement of wholesale prices of between \$40 and \$70, which would translate to in the order of \$80 and \$140 retail, doesn't this confirm that consumers will be paying considerably more to use the NBN?

Answer:

The Implementation Study recommends that wholesale prices be set at such a level as to encourage take-up by offering retailers a superior value proposition compared with offers on other networks, in particular copper.

The Implementation Study modelling has assumed that NBN Co can charge an average wholesale price of \$25-30 for a basic entry level broadband only service (i.e. a layer 2 wholesale bitstream services, 20Mbps speed) on the fibre footprint and \$30-35 wholesale for a broadband/voice bundled service.

There are likely to be a range of retail prices and products to suit the needs of different consumers. However, the key principle from the Study is to set wholesale prices so that consumers will have access to improved services and faster speeds at comparable prices to those they pay today

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Question No: 92

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Wireless Broadband – Underestimated Demand

Senator Nick Minchin asked:

In ACMA's 2008/09 Communications report released on 12 January it states that there are now around 2.1 million wireless broadband subscribers, with a staggering increase of 162 per cent on the previous year.

- a) Does the possibility remain that the ratio of fixed to wireless broadband (90:10) under the NBN is likely to change?
- b) Isn't it true that when Labor first announced its support for a fixed line NBN to 98 per cent, that wireless/mobile broadband subscribers numbered only around 200,000?

Answer:

- a) The Government's objective for the National Broadband Network (NBN) is to connect at least 90 per cent of premises using Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) technology, capable of providing speeds of 100Mbps with the remaining premises to be connected using next generation wireless and satellite technologies, capable of providing speeds of 12 Mbps or more.

The NBN Implementation Study released on 6 May concludes that fibre is the superior future-proofed technology. Transmitting data via optical fibre is faster and will continue to be faster than transmitting data through the air, and fibre is better able to meet with continuing increases in demand for bandwidth. At present, a single fibre is capable of transmitting 1TB of data or 1000 Mbps.

The Study also notes the trend amongst developed nations towards fibre to the premises as the preferred technology for delivering next generation broadband as bandwidth-hungry applications and content become more prevalent. Although mobile networks will continue to be important, they will complement rather than substitute for fixed lines.

In addition the Study found that within the \$43 billion funding envelope, another three per cent of Australian premises could receive fibre to the premises providing 100 Mbps services, exceeding the Government's initial objective. The Government is currently considering the Implementation Study and will respond formally over the coming months.

- b) Around 186,000 or five per cent of Australian's broadband subscribers used wireless broadband services in 2006-07 according to the ACMA Communications Report 2006-07 (p.26 citing *ABS, 8153.0 Internet Activity, Australia, Sep 2006*).

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Question No: 93

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: NextGen Backhaul

Senator Minchin asked:

In relation to the six backhaul links funded under the Government's blackspot program, will NBN Co have to lease capacity from Nextgen?

Answer:

There are six priority locations being served by five backbone links.

Under the Regional Backbone Blackspots Program Agreement, Nextgen Networks will be offering wholesale services on all links for a period of five years. These services will be available to all carriers and will be offered on equivalent terms. If NBN Co requires transmission capacity across these links during the first five years, it will need to acquire it from Nextgen.

Under the RBBP Agreement between the Commonwealth and Nextgen Networks, the Commonwealth has the ability to transfer the infrastructure to NBN Co.

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Question No: 94

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Existing Telecommunication licences – mobile telecommunications

Senator Minchin asked:

- a) In relation to existing spectrum licences held by telecommunications providers; when will a decision be made in relation to re-issuance?
- b) How many existing licences are there and are these all 15-year licences? Do all licences expire in 2013?
- c) Has there been any progress in relation to developing a model in order to value existing licences for the purposes of re-issuance?

Answer:

- a) On 3 March 2010 the Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Conroy, announced spectrum licence renewal will be offered to those incumbents who are using their spectrum licences to provide services to significant numbers of Australian consumers, or who have in place networks capable of providing services to significant numbers of consumers.

Spectrum licences will be re-issued in accordance with the Radiocommunications Act 1992. The Act allows the Minister and the Australian Communications and Media Authority to consider spectrum licence renewal in the public interest. Licences that are not renewed in this manner will be considered directly by the Australian Communications and Media Authority in accordance with the Act. Auction remains an option for all licences.

- b) The Australian Communications and Media Authority has issued tens of thousands of radiofrequency licences, 679 of which are spectrum licences. Spectrum licences providing telecommunications services in key frequency bands 800MHz and above have been issued for 15 years and expire over the period 2013 to 2017.
- c) Yes. In 2009 the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy commissioned a study to estimate the potential value of expiring 15 year spectrum licences.

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Question No: 95

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT

Senator Minchin asked:

On the 5th January the Government released a Green Paper seeking public feedback on the benefits and costs of maximising Australia's digital dividend. Submissions close 26 February.

- a) In relation to the digital dividend target of 126 MHz as outlined in the green paper, can you explain in layman's terms what this would mean nationally in terms of capacity for new services?
- b) What is the best estimate available regarding the value of spectrum that will be freed up from the switchover to digital television?
- c) Would a majority of this allocation be required to enable greater capacity in the wireless/mobile broadband, is that where you expect greatest demand for this spectrum to come from (This was the case in the US)?
- d) Have any estimates been made in relation to reduced value in the event that Telstra was prevented from bidding?
- e) Will NBN Co be permitted to bid for available spectrum?
- f) In relation to existing digital channels will a re-stack result in any or all of them having to change the frequency in which they currently broadcast?
- g) Will spectrum freed up from digital switchover be quarantined for the exclusive use of NBN Co?

Answer:

- a) Spectrum in the 700 MHz band is commonly referred to as the 'waterfront property' of spectrum because of its ability to carry signals over long distances, penetrate buildings and carry large amounts of data. The majority of spectrum licences from the most recent auction of 700 MHz digital dividend spectrum in the United States were acquired by telecommunications providers. As the digital dividend green paper indicates, digital dividend spectrum could potentially be used to provide a range of communications services. The green paper seeks comments on the potential uses of the digital dividend spectrum, the potential benefits of these uses to the Australian community and economy, and the costs involved in releasing contiguous block of spectrum by restacking broadcasting services. Responses to the green paper will assist in informing Government

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decisions on the final size and location of Australia's digital dividend. At this stage, there are no defined outcomes and on this basis it is too early to be able to identify capacity for new services.

- b) Consultancy reports commissioned by the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy in 2008 provided a commercial valuation of digital dividend spectrum under a range of policy and technical scenarios. The consultancy reports were:
- *Digital Dividend Technical Consultancy – Stage 1* (the Kordia report), received by the Department on 19 June 2008, provided a preliminary assessment of the potential quantity of spectrum that could be freed-up by digital television switchover under a range of policy and technical scenarios; and
 - *Digital Dividend Technical Consultancy – Stage 2* (the STM report), received by the Department on 29 September 2008, provided a commercial valuation of some of the scenarios identified by the Kordia report.

The studies contain sensitive commercial information and advice on significant policy issues which are subject to Government consideration and therefore cannot be released.

- c) Internationally, there is a great deal of interest in access to spectrum that can deliver broadband wireless services. Both the 700 megahertz band and 2.5 gigahertz band (for which the ACMA is currently considering pricing, planning and licensing arrangements) are capable of delivering these services.
- d) The Government will not speculate on the auction outcomes as it will depend on future decisions about the frequencies to be made available and how they are packaged, the range of interested market participants and general economic conditions at the time.
- e) The Government has not made a decision on this issue and its considerations will be informed by the Implementation Study report.
- f) The digital dividend green paper noted that in order to clear 126 MHz of spectrum, or 18 channels, at the top of the upper Ultra-High Frequency (UHF) Band V, the digital television services above channel 51 would be reallocated to channels in UHF Band IV and the remainder of UHF band V.

The restack process will involve a substantial body of engineering and administrative work to replan the channel allocations for digital television broadcasting in Australia, and in this regard the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) also has an important role. The ACMA was allocated funding in the 2009-10 Budget to replan and move - that is, 'restack' - digital television services following the cessation of analog television broadcasting.

- g) See answer to part (e) above.

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Question No: 96

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Market Clarity Atlas

Senator Minchin asked:

On 31 July 2009, the committee received a response to a question on notice about whether the Minister's office had agreed to purchase a Market Clarity Industry Atlas, which includes maps of telecommunications infrastructure.

An answer was provided after the committee sought clarification about the question at the end of the 2008/2009 financial year. The answer provided says the Minister's office had not agreed to purchase the Atlas, nor was it mentioned in response to a question about what material does the department and Minister's office rely upon to know where existing infrastructure is located.

However, in the Annual report, p.133 Appendix 7 it lists the purchase from Market Clarity of the Australian Telecom Infrastructure Atlas – Complete Atlas (341 Maps) \$33,000.

- a) Why wasn't this particular purchase confirmed in response to the question on notice, when it is quite clear that at the time the response was provided that this Atlas had been acquired?
- b) Is this Atlas within the Minister's office or within the department?
- c) Is it used by both the Minister's office and the Department?
- d) Who made the decision to purchase the Atlas; was the Minister's office consulted prior to the purchase?
- e) It is mentioned that the Department has a Budget for the purchase of journals and other materials for the Minister's office, what is that Budget?

Answer:

- a) The answer to Question 70 from the May 2009 hearing is correct in that the Minister's office did not approve or have any part in the purchase of the Market Clarity Industry Atlas. The Atlas provides departmental staff with an authoritative information source for use in undertaking their duties. The purchase was approved within the Department and involved no input from the Minister's office. The order to purchase this Atlas was created 19 May 2009, a date before the tabling of the response to Question 70 from the May 2009 hearing. The answer to Question 70 did not refer to this purchase. This was an oversight due to inadequate checking of departmental records.
- b) The Market Clarity Atlas is held within the Department and, as noted in part (a) of this answer, is a resource primarily for the use of departmental staff.
- c) The Atlas is used by departmental staff to prepare briefing to the Minister as well as for a range of other purposes in the Department.

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- d) The purchase was made by the Department's Regional Backbone Blackspots Branch. The Minister's office was not consulted in respect of the purchase.
- e) The answer to the earlier question (Question 70 from the May 2009 Hearing) indicated that the Department has a budget for the purchase of journal, films, reports and other research. This is correct. There is a small amount in the Department's budget for the purchase of reference materials, primarily for use in the Department. When requested to do so, and as is standard practice, journals and other materials are occasionally purchased for use in the Minister's office.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Budget Estimates Hearings February 2010
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 97

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Second reading debate and vote on legislation

Senator Minchin asked:

On October 28 the Minister told the Senate: “I give a commitment to the chamber that the government will not be looking to bring on the second reading debate until the first week back after the break. The second reading debate will take place then. I will be in Egypt at a UN conference that week, so we will not be seeking a vote that week. We will be seeking a vote the following week when I return.”

a) Why did neither the second reading stage of the debate nor a vote occurred last year, despite the Minister’s assurances?

Answer:

At the time of making the statement, it was the Minister’s intention that the Senate would deal with the Telecommunications Legislation Amendment (Competition and Consumer Safeguards) Bill 2009 last year. However, the Bill was not considered due to other Bills, such as the Bills relating to the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, taking a longer time to debate in the Senate than the Minister anticipated.