

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 73

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: ECA127

Topic: EQUIPMENT REQUIRED BY CONSUMERS FOR RECEIPT OF NBN AND DIGITAL TV VIA SATELLITE

Senator Ludlam asked:

Is the equipment that people will be installing and is the dish that will go onto the roof for the TV rollout likely to be compatible with the infill services that are being proposed for the NBN rollout or are people going to have two separate dishes in different directions at different satellites?

Answer:

On 29 January 2009, the Minister announced a package of measures for a digital switchover pilot in the Mildura/Sunraysia region in 2010. The package is expected to include a new satellite service to extend access to digital television to households in areas of signal deficiency. For the period of the pilot commercial broadcasters in Mildura/Sunraysia will be assisted to provide three standard definition services while the national broadcasters will provide one high definition and two standard definition services each.

The Government will closely monitor digital switchover in the Mildura/Sunraysia region so that the outcomes of the pilot, including the satellite provision of television services, can inform decisions on switchover for the remainder of Australia.

Details of the household reception equipment required to receive satellite television services and the satellite to be used are yet to be determined. The types of household satellite equipment required to receive NBN satellite services and the likely extent of satellite coverage required by the NBN will be largely guided by the implementation study. The National Broadband Network implementation study is commencing shortly and is due for completion in early 2010.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 74

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: ECA127

Topic: INFORMATION IN DIGITAL TRACKER ON TYPES OF AERIALS IN USE IN MILDURA

Senator Ludlam asked:

So the tracker survey did not go into the kinds of aerials that people have currently installed?

Answer:

The tracker asked people what kind of aerial is connected to the only (or main) TV set. Respondents indicated the type of aerial connection from the following options: 'rooftop aerial', 'indoor aerial on top of TV', 'satellite dish', 'cable' or 'something else'. The replies also included 'no aerial' or 'do not know'.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Question No: 75

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: ECA131 (26/5/09)

Topic: COMMUNITY BROADCASTERS

Senator Ludlam asked:

How much do capital city community broadcasters need to make the transition?

How does that compare with what you have needed to appropriate for the digital pathway for ABC and SBS, the public broadcasters, for example? The figure I have got here, so correct me if I am wrong, spread across three years is \$795 million. Does that sound right?

For the upgrade path for ABC and SBS over three years, does that sound roughly right?

Answer:

The ABC and SBS, in the current triennium (2009-2012), will receive on-going transmission funding of \$546 million and \$249 million respectively totalling \$795 million. Savings of \$11.4 million over the triennium will result from the progressive closure of analog television signals for the ABC and SBS.

This level of funding meets the cost of the national broadcaster's analog and digital television and radio transmission and distribution expenses. This funding provides no indication of community broadcasters' expenses as it represents the cost of maintaining multiple national radio and television networks.

The Government is considering its policy for the conversion of community television to digital. The community television sector receives significant support through continued access to free spectrum, which is a valuable public resource.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Question No: 76

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: COMMUNITY TV

Senator Birmingham asked:

Has the Government budgeted any funding to assist community broadcasters and regional broadcasters – television or radio – to support their transition to digital broadcasting?

Answer:

For 2009-10 the Government allocated \$6.9 million to assist community radio broadcasters, in the five mainland capital cities, in establishing digital radio infrastructure and to assist them with digital radio transmission expenditure. The Government is also providing \$2.5 million over four years for community broadcasters (both radio and television) to support training needs, including the development of skills related to digital conversion.

The Government is aware of the community television sector's need to convert to digital, and is actively considering the options available to support the transition.

The community television sector receives significant support through continued access to free spectrum, which is a valuable public resource.

The Government is aware of the commercial radio industry's intention to hold trials of digital radio services in regional areas. The industry is in consultation with the Australian Communications and Media Authority in regards to the licensing of, and availability of spectrum for, such trials.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Question No: 77

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: COMMUNITY TV

Senator Birmingham asked:

Will the Government make an allocation of spectrum for community TV broadcasters? If so, when?

Answer:

The Government is aware of the community television sector's need to convert to digital and is considering its approach to this digital conversion.

The community television sector receives significant support through continued access to free spectrum, which is a valuable public resource.

The Government has met with the Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA) and several of the individual community broadcasting stations a number of times, and continues to consult them on the options available for their transition to digital.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 78

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER TASKFORCE PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Senator Birmingham asked:

With reference to Question on Notice 44 from February Additional Estimates:

- 1) Does the \$1,034,198.36 paid to BMF in relation to the DST Public Awareness Campaign include the purchase of airtime for the placement of advertisements?
- 2) If not, how much has been spent, and how much is budgeted to be spent, on advertisements for the campaign?
- 3) How is the \$1,034,198.36 payment broken down between creative, production and airtime purchases?

Answer:

- 1) No
- 2) The amount spent on advertisements for the first phase of the campaign is approximately \$3.5 million
- 3) The payment was broken down as follows: production = \$978,447; creative = \$55,751. There was no airtime purchase in this figure.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 79

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER TASKFORCE PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

Senator Birmingham asked:

- 1) Have free-to-air networks provided any free airtime for advertisements relating to the DST Public Awareness Campaign?

Answer:

- 1) The ABC has provided free airtime for DST Public Awareness.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 80

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: TRANSMITTERS

Senator Birmingham asked:

How many transmitters are owned by parties other than broadcasters? Please break down by ownership group (i.e. local government, community, self help group etc).

How many households or premises are estimated to be covered by these transmitters?

Answer:

There are currently 684 transmitters owned by parties other than broadcasters. The breakdown is as follows:

- Local Government / Councils: 409
- Private sector companies and government owned corporations: 83
- Aboriginal / Torres Straight Island associations, councils and joint ventures: 112
- Community associations: 61
- Government: 19

It is estimated that such sites are serving approximately 154,000 households.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 81

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: TELEVISION BLACK SPOTS

Senator Bushby asked:

Will the Government implement a television Blacks Spots program to address digital blackspots in the lead up to the switch-off of analog television signals?

What other solutions are the Government working on to ensure digital television signals to all households in the country by the time analogue signals are switched off?

Answer:

The Government made funds available in the 2009-10 Budget to address digital television reception problems at Para Escarpment in the Ingle Farm to Craigmore area, Broadford in Victoria and Currie on King Island. Separately, and as part of the switchover to digital television, the Government is examining a number of options to provide television services to communities in areas of signal deficiency.

On 29 January 2009, the Government announced a package of measures as part of a switchover pilot in the Mildura/Sunraysia region in 2010. One element of this pilot is expected to be a new satellite service to extend access to digital television to communities in areas of signal deficiency. The Government will closely monitor digital switchover in the Mildura/Sunraysia region in order to inform decisions on switchover for the remainder of Australia.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 82

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: GENERAL YOUTH: YOUTH SUPPORT

Senator Hanson-Young asked:

- (1) Has the Government formally responded to the recommendations from the Senate inquiry into the sexualisation of children in the contemporary media environment that handed down its final report on Jun 26 2008?
- (2) If so, what Government measures have been implemented to protect young children?
- (3) If not is there a timeframe for response?

Answer:

- (1) No.
- (2) See answer to question 1.
- (3) The Government response is expected to be tabled in parliament in the second half of 2009.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 83

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL TRACKER

Senator Ludlam asked:

In view of the work on domestic aerial systems in Mildura DBCDE's answer to Question on Notice from 23 February 66 (a), (b) and (c) revealed would be undertaken by ACMA, what were the results of any questions asked in the Tracker survey concerning what aerials respondents used in Mildura?

What did those responses indicate to DBCDE concerning the state of readiness for digital terrestrial reception of those aerials?

From the Tracker what proportion of TV homes in Mildura have at least one TV set attached to a portable indoor TV aerial?

Answer:

The results of questions asked in the Tracker survey concerning the aerials used by respondents in Mildura were as follows:

The sample size of respondents was 299 and indicated in percentage terms that 90% were using a rooftop aerial, 4% an indoor aerial on top of the television, 14% a satellite dish, 5% cable and 2% an aerial tower or pole outside their house. The percentages add up to more than 100 because some respondents had more than one type of aerial.

As far as state of readiness is concerned those responses indicated that 90% were using a rooftop aerial.

The survey indicated that 4% of respondents have at least one indoor aerial on top of a TV.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 84

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL TRACKER

Senator Ludlam asked:

One of the major “negatives” the Tracker reported regarding digital was “reception difficulties”. To what extent do you think these difficulties are contributed to by the need for a significant upgrade of a significant number of domestic aerial systems?

Answer:

In the 9,768 households interviewed in the Tracker in Metropolitan, Regional, and Remote Australia, only 6% (588 households) cited “reception problems” as a negative of switchover.

The respondents, when asked what they see as the main negatives of the switchover to digital TV, provided information based on what they *observed* – for example, weak signal, storm interference, pixellation, freezes and others. The Tracker did not ask follow up questions to probe into the respondents’ observation on reception problems because the respondents are not the best source of accurate technical information on the *factual* cause of the reception problem – unless they are qualified technicians themselves or they are passing on information received from a qualified technician.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 85

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL TRACKER

Senator Ludlam asked:

If a house finds itself having to replace its current terrestrial aerial system and get those signals to all rooms where terrestrial TV is received, would such a digital conversion be likely to justify a description of “a simple and inexpensive task”. Would such house be likely to find that the cost of a set top box would only be a small proportion of its cost to convert to digital?

Answer:

The basic cost of digital conversion for a household with one television set is around \$40 for a basic, standard definition (SD) set top box. For a household with one television set, and which needs a replacement of its terrestrial aerial system, digital conversion cost could be expected to be around \$375. This amount covers the installation of antenna, roof-top mount, cabling, and labour costs. Conversion of additional TV sets will incur additional costs.

Lessons from the Mildura/Sunraysia satellite pilot will be closely monitored by the Government to inform decisions on the general switchover in Australia. An element of the pilot includes providing an in-home assistance package to qualifying households to convert to digital. The package includes providing a government contractor to visit homes to deliver, install and tune a digital set top box, and where necessary, undertake antenna and cabling upgrades.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 86

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: NEW SATELLITE SERVICES

Senator Ludlam asked:

The new satellite services for Mildura will include the ABC and SBS HD and main SD channels. Is it true that apart from resolution of the picture there is no content difference between the ABC and SBS HD and main SD channels?

Why would the Government pay for the satellite capacity to carry two identical content services of the ABC and SBS?

If the ABC and SBS SD simulcast services were not carried is it true that 2 other SD broadcasting services with unique content could be carried within the same budget set aside for the satellite services.

Answer:

Currently, other than picture resolution, there is no difference in content between the ABC and SBS HD and main SD channels. However, there is no requirement for the content on the HD channels to match that of the SD channels and the ABC and SBS may choose to provide different content on these channels in the future.

The new satellite service is one element of the switchover pilot being conducted in the Mildura/Sunraysia region, part of which is expected to involve the satellite transmission of the full suite of national broadcasting services. This will ensure that people reliant on the satellite service receive the same ABC and SBS services as other households in Mildura.

The outcomes of the Mildura pilot, including the content and availability of satellite services, will be considered by the Government and inform decisions on switchover for the rest of Australia.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 87

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL READY CONFERENCE

Senator Minchin asked:

- 1) Are you in a position to provide a final reconciliation on the costs of the digital ready conference?
- 2) What proportion of the total expenses was offset by delegate registration, sponsorship etc.?

Answer:

1)

Budget	\$760,000
Actual expenditure	\$698,615.96 Includes: Venue Costs \$618,615 Event Planet fee \$80,000
Revenue raised from registrations and sponsorships	\$172,000
Net cost of conference	\$526,295.96

(Cost excludes GST)

- 2) \$172,000 or approximately 23% of the overall cost of the conference.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 88

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DIGITAL SWITCHOVER – COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER

Senator Minchin asked:

When will the Community Liaison Officer be appointed in the Mildura switchover area?

Answer:

A Community Liaison Officer will be appointed in late July or early August 2009.

Senator Minchin asked:

Is the Community Liaison Officer a paid position?

Answer:

Yes

Senator Minchin asked:

How will the Community Liaison Officers be recruited and appointed?

Answer:

The Taskforce will enter into formal agreements with locally-based organisations in each switchover region that have the necessary capacity, community networks and knowledge to host a Community Liaison Officer position. The Community Liaison Officers will be recruited and appointed by each of the organisations that are funded by the Taskforce to host an Officer. The funding agreements will specify the role and activities of the Officers.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 89

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: DST - COMMUNICATIONS

Senator Minchin asked:

- 1) Can you confirm that you are budgeting to spend approximately \$12 million in 2009/10, \$17.8 million in 2010/11 and \$8.6 million in 2011/12 on communication campaigns regarding switchover?
- 2) How much do you anticipate having spent on information/communications activities regarding switchover this financial year?
- 3) Can you provide an itemised costing for this communications plan for the current financial year, including the number of print, TV and radio advertisements?

Answer:

- 1) The amount budgeted for communication campaigns for switchover in 2009-10 is approximately \$23.146 million; in 2010-11 is \$22.491 million; and 2011-12 is \$13.437 million.
- 2) The amount the Department has spent on communication activities in 2008-09 is \$7,069,801
- 3) The Budget breakdown for the 2008-09 financial year is approximately:

Printing and mailhouse - \$100,056

Call centre - \$93,186

Advertising creative and production - \$2,398,584

Research - \$796,782

Event management - \$177,238

Media buy – \$3,503,955

There were two TV advertisements produced and one radio advertisement. The radio advertisement was also recorded in 21 languages.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Question No: 90

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: NITV and COMMUNITY TV

Senator Ludlam asked:

The Government has appropriated \$795m for just ABC and SBS digital and analog distribution and transmission operational expenses for the next three years.

When is it going to provide digital TV spectrum and relevant funding to NITV and Capital City Community TV for digital TV distribution and transmission?

Answer:

The Government is aware of the community television sector's need to convert to digital and is considering its approach to this digital conversion.

The community television sector receives significant support through continued access to free spectrum, which is a valuable public resource.

The government has met with the Australian Community Television Alliance (ACTA) and several of the individual stations a number of times, and continue to consult them on the options available for their transition to digital.

The National Indigenous Television Service is the responsibility of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 91

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: NEW SATELLITE SERVICES

Senator Ludlam asked:

What is the future for the digital TV trial run by Broadcast Australia in Sydney which carries at no charge the NITV service? What would happen to these NITV transmissions were the new owners of Broadcast Australia to close the trial down?

Given this could happen as early as August 2009, how would the Government go about continuing to provide free to air terrestrial access to NITV for the biggest single indigenous population (Sydney) if the trial did close?

Answer:

Broadcast Australia operates a trial datacasting service that is authorised by a scientific licence issued by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA). The trial operates in Sydney on one of the two currently unassigned UHF television channels known as 'Channel A' and 'Channel B'. The scientific licence for the trial is renewed on a three-monthly basis by the ACMA until Government policy on the future of unassigned channels is finalised.

Carriage of the NITV service on Broadcast Australia's datacasting trial was authorised by the ACMA in July 2008. The continuation of the datacasting trial under the scientific licence is a matter for Broadcast Australia and ACMA.

The National Indigenous Television service is the responsibility of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009

Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio

Question No: 92

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: NITV and COMMUNITY TV

Senator Ludlam asked:

When the Government determines the digital conversion for Capital City Community TV stations in the metropolitan markets and Lismore will it provide separate digital spectrum on that frequency to NITV as well?

If not, and assuming a standard definition version of the Community TV services would take at most only 25% of the capacity of that frequency, who would use the remaining transmission capacity and when would that use be allocated and how?

Answer:

Please refer to question number 90.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2009
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy

Question No: 93

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: Written

Topic: NITV

Senator Ludlam asked:

NITV is already provided to the Mildura TV market via:

- a. free-to-air Aurora satellite for those who decide to buy a separate satellite reception facility just for NITV; and
- b. via the basic tier of Neighbourhood Cable's cable system and Austar's satellite platform.

Given its current penetration into the Mildura market, if there is room on the transponder used to provide the new satellite services to Mildura would the Government consider providing the NITV service to those homes in Mildura who will need to avail themselves of these new satellite services?

Answer:

The Government is not currently considering the carriage of NITV as part of the Mildura switchover pilot.

Policy on the future of The National Indigenous Television service is the responsibility of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts Portfolio.