

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Budget Estimates Hearing 25-29 May 2009

Question: PM39a-e

Outcome 1, Output 1

Topic: National Broadband Network

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PM39a:

Senator BERNARDI-Okay. When was your advice provided?

Mr Mrdak-I would have to take that on notice to get some exact details. We will take that on notice, if that is okay.

PM39b:Senator BERNARDI-Did Prime Minister and Cabinet propose that a fibre-to-the-home national broadband network be considered as an alternative proposal?

Mr Mrdak-I do not think I am in a position to provide details of the advice provided or the options canvassed, but as I say I could probably check details in relation to when the advice was provided. I would have to take on notice the extent to which I could provide details of what options and advice were provided.

PM39c:

Senator BERNARDI—You mentioned earlier that you consulted with them or that you had given advice to Prime Minister's. But when specifically did you start discussing this with Senator Conroy's department?

Mr Clively—We would have to check that date for you, but there were ongoing discussions.

Senator BERNARDI—I am interested in when they commenced and when they concluded, quite frankly.

PM39d:

Mr Mrdak—Again, as Mr Clively has indicated, we were involved in a process of providing advice along with the other central agencies—Treasury and Finance—for the government. We work very closely with those two agencies in relation to advice to the cabinet.

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Senator BERNARDI—This is no surprise—I am going to ask when you provided that advice. I presume you will take that on notice.

PM39e:

Senator BERNARDI—Can you tell me when the department became aware the government would support the fibre-to-the-home proposal?

Mr Mrdak—Again, I would have to seek dates. The government took a decision which led to the announcement on 7 April. I would have to take on notice the dates. There was an ongoing process of consideration of these matters by the cabinet.

Answer: The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (the Department) is unaware of any discussion with the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy (DBCDE) regarding the Fibre-to-the-Home proposal prior to the finalisation of the Expert Panel Report. There were ongoing discussions between the Department and DBCDE on options for the National Broadband Network between January 2009, when Cabinet deliberations commenced, and the announcement of the policy on 7 April 2009.

The Department is not able to provide details of the policy advice it provided to the Government.

The Government announced the National Broadband Network Fibre-to-the-Home policy on 7 April 2009. The Department was involved in policy discussions as part of Cabinet processes from January 2009 to 7 April 2009.