

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates May 2017

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 26

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 75, 24/05/2017

Topic: Broadband Monitoring Scheme trial - success

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked:

Senator O'NEILL: Mr Robinson, when you talked about the trial objectives being to provide consumers with more information about the factors impacting on speeds, is that really the objective of the trial? Is that the sole objective?

Mr Robinson: Yes.

Senator O'NEILL: Or is the objective to provide consumers with information about the relative speed performance of service providers?

Mr Robinson: My understanding is it will include that as well.

Senator O'NEILL: That is what I am trying to get to. What will success look like? Just measuring speed is one thing, but relative speed performance of service providers is quite another.

Mr Robinson: Yes. My understanding is it will provide information to consumers about the types of speed experienced across different RSPs and, for example, at different times of the day.

Ms Spaseski: Yes, that is right, for peak and non-peak periods as well.

Senator O'NEILL: Are you reading from a document there? Is that a public document?

Ms Spaseski: The methodology and the details of the program are a matter for the ACCC. I have some notes with me and what we cannot answer we will take on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Could you provide me with a fuller explanation of what exactly it is that you are going to see as success so we can understand what it is that you are attempting to do with this \$7 million that you are taking from the industry?

Mr Robinson: Yes.

Answer:

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) will deliver the Broadband Performance Reporting and Monitoring (BPMR) program.

The ACCC program will test and publicly report on typical speed and performance of broadband plans provided over the National Broadband Network (NBN). This information will assist consumers comparing and shopping around for broadband services and checking that they receive what they are paying for.

The program will also provide retail service providers with independent performance information from which to draw when advertising the speeds offered on their retail services, as well as generating data for use by the broader industry. The ACCC advise that data derived from the program may also assist to determine if performance issues are being caused by the performance of the NBN, or by RSPs not buying sufficient capacity.

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The program will collect data about performance and reliability of fixed line broadband and publicly report results quarterly. The ACCC reports will differentiate the performance of broadband services across different retail service providers and speed tiers, how service performance varies during busy periods, as well as comparing metropolitan and regional areas. The ACCC has issued a request for tender for a provider of independent testing services for the BPMR program. The tender closed on 26 June 2017.

On 19 June 2017, the ACCC called for volunteers to participate in the program. Approximately 4000 volunteers will be sent hardware-based monitoring devices to install on the modem in their home. These devices will perform remote testing to determine typical speeds on fixed line NBN services at various times throughout the day. Testing is expected to commence in August/September 2017 with first results expected to be published by the end of the year.