

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: 3

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 6, 24/05/2016

Topic: USO Taskforce

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked:

Senator O'NEILL: Of 80 people, four or five have been allocated to this task, or you have brought in new people?

Ms Sullivan: At the moment. The process we are going through—as Mr Robinson said, we have three or four internals currently, the core part of the task force. We have an officer coming over from Prime Minister and Cabinet starting next week, who will be leading the task force. We have run an internal expression of interest, so we have also staffed up with a couple of internals within the department. That is how we have got up to four or five. We will also start a scoping exercise, once we have the officer on board who is leading the task force, over the next couple of weeks, which will be scoping out the amount of work, and we will staff up on the basis that.

Senator O'NEILL: In anticipation of that scoping exercise, could you give us an indication of what that will be—a description of the scope?

Ms Sullivan: I would see it as sitting down and looking at—it is a substantial piece of work that needs to be undertaken. It is looking at taking the Productivity Commission recommendations, looking at the streams of work that need to be done underneath that— what a government response would look like to implement the report.

Senator O'NEILL: Any further detail that you can provide in writing on that would be much appreciated, as soon as possible.

Answer:

The Universal Service Obligation (USO) Taskforce Branch has been established within the Department of Communications and the Arts. At a broad level, the function of the USO Taskforce will be to develop policy options relating to future arrangements for the telecommunications USO, for the Government's consideration.