

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2014
Communications Portfolio
Australian Communications and Media Authority

Question No: 10

Program No. Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Telstra's copper network

Senator URQUHART asked:

In relation to the operation of Telstra's copper network:

- a. Is the transmission of the high frequencies used for broadband services over copper pairs more susceptible to faults caused by poor joints and copper corrosion than voice frequencies?
- b. Where field technicians find that an allocated twisted pair is not working they will sometimes utilise an "unmatched" pair by using one wire from each of two twisted pairs. If this pair is used for broadband will other pairs in the cable experience greater interference at voice frequencies or at the higher frequencies used for broadband?
- c. When there is external interference from external sources (as referred to on page 42 of 154 on the summary of advice provided to the Department by NBN Co and published by Delimiter) does this affect all services in a cable?
- d. Does the ACMA support NBN Co's contention in the Strategic Review that voice fault rates are a suitable proxy for data faults that rely on higher frequencies?
- e. Is it the responsibility of the Department or the ACMA to understand the operation of Telstra's copper network and provide advice to Government?

Answer:

- a. Poor joints and corrosion may contribute to the degradation of the performance of copper wires however the ACMA does not collect or have sufficient information on this issue to be able to provide a comparative assessment between the relative effects on voice and data services.
- b. This element of network design and operation is best addressed by those industry participants which build, maintain and operate telecommunications networks.
- c. This element of network design and operation is best addressed by those industry participants which build, maintain and operate telecommunications networks.
- d. The ACMA does not receive reports of faults in ADSL service or reports of how conditions in the copper pair network would impact on the performance of ADSL services. Consequently, the ACMA is not in a position to form a view on the suitability of voice fault rates as a proxy for data faults that rely on higher frequencies.
- e. The ACMA has a function to report to and advise the Minister in relation to the telecommunications industry. While this gives the ACMA the remit to investigate a potentially wide range of industry issues at its discretion, with respect to Telstra its focus historically has been on the reliability of services provided to customers, rather than the underlying operational aspects of Telstra's copper network.