



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee  
Budget Estimates 2021-22  
Thursday, 27 May 2021  
Daily summary

Here is the summary of today's proceedings in the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee estimates hearing.

The committee met from 9.02am until 8.47pm.

The committee examined the communications and arts outcomes of the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio, including:

- NBN Co Limited (NBN Co); Australian Postal Corporation; Australia Council; Screen Australia; Office of the eSafety Commissioner; Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA); and Classification Board.

Topics discussed by the committee included:

- NBN Co's debt raising decision-making;
- Government's position on NBN Co executive bonuses;
- difference between a bonus payment, short-term incentive payments and an at-risk payment, and NBN Co's remuneration arrangements;
- NBN Co's executive bonuses paid during the pandemic and negative cash-flow circumstances;
- customer wait times for NBN technician call-outs and the average number of appointments taken for customers to get connected;
- progress in the NBN fibre-to-the-node network;
- update on improvements in NBN Co's free cashflows;
- requests for a meeting with NBN Co from the Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union of Australia (CEPU) in relation to issues experienced by contractors working for NBN Co;
- NBN Co's tender process for delivery partners;
- implementation and testing of NBN Co's new contracting IT system 'Unify' and ServiceMax application;
- questions in relation to reports of reduction in pay rates for NBN Co sub-contractors;
- ability for NBN Co to audit prime contractors;
- NBN Co's support to communities during natural disasters, and the example of Cyclone Seroja that affected Geraldton, Western Australia;
- BSA Limited's delivery partner contracts with NBN Co, including the details of BSA Limited's Unified Field Operations (Services) Agreement with NBN Co;
- ongoing issues regarding delivery of high-speed internet in parts of the Hybrid Fibre Coaxial (HFC) network;
- update on rollout of the Fibre to the Curb (FTTC) network;
- NBN Co's charging structure for installing or servicing Lead-In Conduits, and NBN Co's ownership over these assets;
- Boston Consulting Group's review of Australia Post's changes to services and regulations throughout 2020;
- changes in Australia Post's strategy regarding parcel delivery bikes and outsourcing to contractors;
- details surrounding relief postal delivery staff sent to Tasmania throughout the state election;
- Government's interpretation of Australia Post's service obligations after the lapse of COVID-19 regulatory relief, and their ongoing strategy for this transition;
- delays in letter delivery and Australia Post's strategies to minimise contraventions of its service obligations;

- process taken to appoint the new CEO of Australia Post;
- Australia Post's engagement with communication and reputation management consultancy Domestique and Mr David Luff;
- terms of the Finance Department's contracts with the Boston Consulting Group;
- Australia Post's capturing of customs data for outbound international parcels;
- Australia Post's interaction with Licensed Post Offices (LPOs) following the departure of the previous CEO Ms Christine Holgate;
- communication between Australia Post and the Shareholder Ministers regarding executive bonuses;
- Australia Council's input into the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) fund's administration;
- differentiation between the purpose of Australia Council grants and the RISE fund;
- breakdown of Australia Council grants allocated to regional-based organisations;
- application process for the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework (NPAPF) and a breakdown of the grants under NPAPF allocated for four-year and eight-year funding commitments;
- allocation of funds under Playing Australia: Regional Performing Arts Touring Fund (Playing Australia);
- need for insurance for COVID-related cancellations or delays to events and the conditions for Playing Australia and RISE Fund grants in case of COVID-related cancellations or delays of events;
- Screen Australia's input into the Government's proposal to lower the Producer Offset for film production and for changes to documentaries, and the expected impacts on industry;
- Screen Australia's input into proposed changes to local content quotas for streaming services and television;
- breakdown of funding allocation for the new Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme and the threshold test for what constitutes cyber abuse under the scheme;
- applicability of the Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme threshold test to the case of a parliamentarian's online behaviour, and to the cyber harassment of athlete Tayla Harris;
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner (OeSC) liaison with social media platforms in the case of large-scale cyber harassment;
- consequences for perpetrators of cyber abuse and remedies available under the OeSC's schemes;
- plans for software and cyber infrastructure to facilitate finding and removing intimate images or videos from online platforms;
- communications between the OeSC and the Government regarding a parliamentarian's online behaviour;
- use of formal and informal end-user notices in cases of cyberbullying and cyber harassment;
- powers of the OeSC to direct social media platforms to remove posts or respond to harassment or abuse, and to respond to misinformation on social media and digital platforms;
- resources regarding misinformation on social media and digital platforms targeted at adults and seniors;
- prevalence of use of video games for young people, their experience of bullying on video games, and the influence of video games on attitudes towards women;
- OeSC input into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's International Cyber and Critical Technology Engagement Strategy;
- number of complaints received regarding the documentary 'Fight for Planet A: Our Climate Challenge' and an update on the ACMA decision in relation to the Cattle Council of Australia's complaint;
- complaints to the ACMA in relation to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC);
- rules in relation to blackout periods for advertising during election periods;
- ACMA's role in addressing misinformation online and input into developing a voluntary misinformation and news quality code for digital platforms;
- ACMA's work in relation to COVID-19 scams and misinformation;
- ACMA's role in relation to 5G and electromagnetic energy, work with Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA), and briefings to the Minister and Department;
- update on the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund administered by ACMA, which is a part of the Australian Government's \$60.4 million Regional and Small Publishers Jobs and Innovation Package;
- possibility of a second round of the Regional and Small Publishers Innovation Fund;
- implementation of the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code, and the maintenance of the register of arbitrators;
- update on the establishment of the National Self-Exclusion Register;

- summary of ACMA's latest annual compliance report for the Australian Content Standard;
- *2020 Review of Australian Classification Regulation* and the future of the Classification Board following the proposal expand the ACMA's remit to include the functions of the Classification Board;
- split of functions between the Classification Board and the Department;
- number of staff at the Classification Board and their locations;
- current property lease arrangements for the Classification Board's office; and
- classification of Grand Theft Auto V.