

Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

Division: Communications Services and Consumer

Inquiry: Availability and access to enabling communications infrastructure in Australia's external territories

Topic: Application of universal service obligations to the Indian Ocean Territories

Proof Hansard Page: Written (25 February 2021)

Committee asked:

The extent to which community (or universal) service obligations apply to telecommunications in the Indian Ocean Territories, the level of interest from Telstra and the extent to which such obligations are currently fulfilled.

Answer:

The Commonwealth telecommunications legal framework is set out in the *Telecommunications Act 1997* and the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999*. This includes the universal service obligation (USO) and the new statutory infrastructure provider (SIP) regime, which both apply to Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.

The USO and SIP arrangements underpin the Universal Service Guarantee (USG), which covers reasonable access to the standard telephone service, payphones and wholesale broadband services operating with peak speeds of at least 25 megabits per second (Mbps) download and 5 Mbps upload. Telstra is responsible for the telephone and payphone components of the USG under the USO, while NBN Co Limited is generally responsible for delivering the broadband component of the USG under the SIP laws. Other SIPs have been designated for particular areas such as new developments they have been contracted to service.

Telstra advised the Committee in its submission to the inquiry that it currently provides about 350 telephone services in Cocos (Keeling) Islands, including three payphones, and also provides over 630 satellite, voice and mobile services, including four payphones, on Christmas Island, in fulfilment of the USO where appropriate. NBN Co provides satellite broadband services to the Indian Ocean Territories in fulfilment of its SIP obligations.