

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates February 2017

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 19

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Written, 14/03/2017

Topic: Blackspot Audit

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

1. Did the Department conduct any audit of a Funding Recipient's compliance with the certification that Round 2 base stations were not part of the mobile network operator's forward-build network expansion plans as indicated in the Round 2 Guidelines paragraph 2.3? Please provide details.
2. How many of the Round 2 funded base stations meet the requirements of the Program Guidelines at paragraph 5.3.5:
"that the base station structure is of sufficient height and robustness for accommodating and supporting additional equipment required by additional Mobile Network Operators"? Please provide details of any base stations that do not meet this requirement.

Answer:

1. In accordance with section 2.3.1 of the Program Guidelines, all applicants provided written certification that any proposed base stations for which Commonwealth funding was sought were not part of their 2016-17 to 2017-18 forward build network plans as at 1 January 2016.

As noted in the certification, it is an offence for a person to obtain a financial advantage from the Commonwealth where the person is not entitled to the financial advantage or the other person dishonestly obtains the financial advantage (sections 134.2 and 135.2 of the Schedule to the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (the Act). Giving false or misleading information is also a serious offence (sections 136.1 and 137.1 of the Schedule to the Act). Serious penalties apply in relation to these offences, including imprisonment.

The Department periodically monitors whether the unsuccessful base stations are subsequently built by the proposing carrier. If this occurs the Department will investigate the matter with the carrier.

2. Of the round 2 funding base stations, 137 greenfield and 11 brownfield macrocell sites support co-location, as per the requirements specified under section 5.3.5 of the Program Guidelines.

There are 49 round 2 satellite small cell base stations being located on facilities which by their nature do not support co-location. Co-location was not offered by applicants at four greenfield sites. Co-location was not offered at 69 existing brownfield locations where it was not technically feasible (of which 34 are expected to co-locate on NBN Co sites).