Question No: 254

The Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA)

Hansard Ref: Written, 10/03/2017

Topic: Maintaining telephone communications during prolonged blackouts

Senator Griff, Stirling asked:

1. Is it possible for the *Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act 1999* to be amended to safeguard access to landlines for emergency calls, or ensure more than 24 hours of battery storage for mobile base stations in high bushfire risk communities?

2. Has ACMA raised the problem of lack of phone access during prolonged blackouts (for mobiles, and most landlines under the NBN) with the Critical Infrastructure Advisory Council?

   (a) If so, what was discussed? Have there been any outcomes?

   (b) If not, what is ACMA doing to address the problems of prolonged power outages cutting off modern communication methods?

Answer:

1. The amendment of primary legislation is a matter for the Department of the Communications and the Arts.

2. No

   (a) Not applicable

   (b) In 2014, the ACMA made the *Telecommunications (Backup Power and Informed Decisions) Service Provider Determination 2014* (the Determination), which requires carriage service providers (CSPs) to provide certain information regarding continuity of voice services in a power outage to consumers using NBN's fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) technology.

   In 2015, the ACMA undertook an audit of CSPs providing services over the NBN FTTP network. Thirty-nine CSPs were selected for audit. Where those CSPs were providing voice services within the scope of the Determination, their compliance with the information provision requirements of the Determination were assessed. All of the audited CSPs were able to demonstrate that they were complying with the information provision requirements of the Determination.