

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2016
Communications Portfolio
Department of Communications and the Arts

Question No: 10

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 20-21, 18/10/2016

Topic: Optus HFC network

Senator Chisholm, Anthony asked:

Senator CHISHOLM: I understand that. What I am trying to establish is when the government became aware that there was an issue with the Optus HFC network.

Senator Fifield: NBN undertake constantly a range of scenario planning. They are forever looking at and reviewing what is the best and most cost-effective way of rolling out the NBN. So that was and is an ongoing exercise on the part of NBN.

Senator CHISHOLM: So it is a pretty obtuse answer here when I am really trying to get the specifics of when the government knew that there was an issue with the Optus HFC network. We know that there was a media report on 25 November 2015. Surely there would have been some conversation given that the previous minister—in terms of his role with this, there would have been some communication from the NBN to the government and establishing what and when that was.

Senator Fifield: NBN, as Bill Morrow has indicated previously at estimates, has been trialling and is looking at technology called 'fibre to the distribution point'. He has been very upfront at estimates that that is something that he was looking at and that there were trials taking place to see if that was something that would be appropriate to deploy and to see if that would be a cost-effective option in some situations. I was aware of it because everyone here was aware that that was being looked at as well. So NBN have ultimately taken the decision that, where it could have been an option to use Optus HFC, they will be using different technology solutions.

Senator CHISHOLM: I think I am just going to have to be really clear with my question. When did the NBN Co—on what date—first advise the government of its plan to abandon the use of the Optus HFC network?

Senator Fifield: I will take that on notice.

Answer:

Refer answer to question 19.