

**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: 11**

**Program 1.1**

**Hansard Ref: Page 101, 18/10/2016**

**Topic: Mobile Black Spots Programme – Retention of taxpayers money**

**Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:**

**Senator URQUHART:** Why is it that Telstra and Vodafone are retaining taxpayers' money until that last base station is built in 2018? Why does that happen? Is there any other company out there that can hang onto taxpayers' money for a period of two years at the expense of the taxpayer? Why is that happening? Minister?

**Senator Fifield:** I will ask Mr Paterson to speak to the design of the program.

**Mr Paterson:** I will have to take that on notice. I believe we would be able to exert that clawback provision before the end of the program. But I will have to take that on notice.

**Mr Robinson:** As Mr Paterson said, it is important to note that there are clawback provisions in the funding agreements and I think there was—

**Answer:**

The Commonwealth retains the funds for the program and makes part payments to the carriers upon completion of each base station.