

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: 3

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Pages 10-11, 12 and 117, 18/10/2016

Topic: 54 Electorate briefs – FOI disclosure log

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked:

Senator O'NEILL: I want to get your response to the 54 electorate briefs that are in the FOI disclosure log number A091-2016 on the department's website. They were published on 30 May 2016. Are you aware of those?

Dr Smith: Yes.

Senator O'NEILL: Do they represent the most complete and recent holding of NBN electorate briefs in the department's possession?

Ms Flannery: They were the briefs that responded to the specific FOI request, which was at a particular point in time.

Senator O'NEILL: My question is, are they the most recent holdings of NBN electoral briefs or not?

Ms Flannery: They would not be, because they responded to a specific request which was at a point in time.

Senator O'NEILL: If I understand you clearly, there is more recent data that you have access to?

Ms Flannery: That could be the case, but that is outside of the FOI space.

Mr Robinson: Ms Flannery looks after the FOI requests. We will have to take on notice whether we have done some since. We may not have. I am not aware of it, so we will have to take it on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Have electorate briefs for every federal electorate in Australia been prepared?

Mr Robinson: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Could you explain the structure of those briefs? Is there commercially sensitive information or not?

Mr Robinson: I will take that on notice as well.

Senator O'NEILL: So my request is: can the full set of most recent electorate briefs be tabled as quickly as possible?

Mr Robinson: We will take that on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Is there any chance that could be found out? We will be here until 11 o'clock tonight. Is there any chance that you could expedite that?

Mr Robinson: We will see what we can do.

Senator O'NEILL: Thank you. Could you also investigate whether state and territory briefs have been prepared?

Mr Robinson: Yes, Senator.

...

Senator O'NEILL: Can I add to my request to the department a little bit earlier? I note that there were 54 that went up. There are 96 others for the other electorates that were not briefed and I would like some information on those as well, not just the 54 that have had some FOI response. I

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Ms O'Loughlin, is it you for this?

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Senator O'NEILL: I just wanted to ask a quick follow-up from this morning, because it has been a long, long time. I am really hopeful that I might have provided enough time now for a response. My question—it was the first question—about the 54 electorate briefs and the FOI disclosure log: you were going to see whether you could find out if they were the most recent of the NBN electorate briefs and the department's position. Have you been able to find that information yet?

Mr Robinson: Yes. We have prepared later briefing than that.

Senator O'NEILL: Would you be able to table it?

Mr Robinson: We will have to take it on notice, because we just have to check the information with NBN Co. As to whether we can provide it to you, we will take that on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Right. So, I asked this morning for the full set of the most recent electorate briefs to be tabled without delay, and I am restating that, seeking the state and territory briefs, and also electorate briefs for every federal electorate in Australia.

Mr Robinson: Okay. We will take that on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Up to the most recent. Thank you.

Answer:

The Government requires a high degree of transparency from NBN Co Limited (nbn) in its communications with the public and Parliament. The company publishes online weekly progress reports on network deployment and active services, has an online map available showing areas where fixed line and fixed wireless rollout construction is occurring and where services are available (www.nbnco.com.au/learn-about-the-nbn/rollout-map.html) and delivers quarterly management briefing to the public.

Parts of the electorate briefs are commercial-in-confidence and redacting those sections in 150 reports would involve an unreasonable diversion of departmental resources. State and Territory based rollout information is available through nbn's weekly progress report on the company's website at www.nbnco.com.au/corporate-information/about-nbn-co/corporate-plan/weekly-progress-report.html.