

Accountability measures for decision-making for the delivery of major infrastructure, contracting of public services and/or the privatisation of public assets in NSW

Hearing – 25/03/2024

Questions on Notice

QUESTION 1 – Page 10

The CHAIR: Would it be possible to quantify the amount that was spent on the black spot remediation – those things that would have been covered, had the CCEP been ruled out on time?

PETER ELLIOTT: For the purpose of defining, are you asking from the start of CCEP up to the full year '24?

The CHAIR: Correct.

PETER ELLIOTT: I can take that question on notice.

ANSWER

The \$84.5 million Stay Safe and Keep Operational (SSKO) program has been used to upgrade Private Mobile Radio (PMR) sites, refresh radio terminals (new portable radio and mobile technology), address radio coverage issues at locations that would not be covered by the Public Safety Network (PSN), and prepare systems for PSN migration.

The delay to the Critical Communications Enhancement Program (CCEP) has not impacted the delivery of items within SSKO. The SSKO funding has not been used to maintain the legacy radio network.

NSW Ambulance has used Business as Usual (BAU) funding within the Radio and Telecommunications team to maintain and run legacy radio towers.

From January 2021 to March 2024, NSW Ambulance spent approximately \$4.3 million on radio tower maintenance, rent and utilities using BAU funding.

It is likely that these sites would have been decommissioned with the rollout of the CCEP.

QUESTION 2 – Page 12-13

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Mr Elliott, this goes back a little bit to Mr Roberts' question about ultimate responsibility here. If I could use one small example, there's the question of authenticated terminals and unauthenticated terminals. It seems that about 42 per cent of the terminals were tested and authenticated. Who does that work? Does Health do the ambulance side and police do the police side? Or does the NSW Telco Authority send people in to do all that authentication on your behalf, and have they stopped doing that?

PETER ELLIOTT: I would need to take that question on notice. I'm not actually sure. I'm sorry, I haven't heard of the term before. I'm assuming it's about verifying and testing and who actually tests our radio network.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Yes, 100 per cent – to make sure I can't make one in my back shed that will pick up the bits and pieces.

PETER ELLIOTT: NSW Ambulance radio communications are not encrypted at the moment. We need them encrypted. We do have a radio infrastructure unit that does quite considerable testing in regard to our radios to make sure they work and make sure that we have area coverage. One of the reasons why NSW Ambulance is still using Tait portable radios is because they connect to our PMR network and have capacity for the duress alarm. To do the migration across to Motorola means we need the PSN to be rolled out across the State so we have that adaptability and capacity across the area. That is just one of the examples of what our radio infrastructure unit does. It goes out and tests. To actually verify

every unit to make sure that it works, I would need to be sure about how that process works to be able to provide a succinct answer to you.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: If you wouldn't mind taking that on notice, that would be great — not just whether or not they work but who is responsible for authenticating that this is an actual registered important device that sits inside of our unit.

PETER ELLIOTT: Yes, I will take that on notice.

The CHAIR: It's more an issue about cybersecurity. Can the terminals be cloned and somebody pretend to be somebody else and hack into the network?

PETER ELLIOTT: I realised where that question was going and that's the reason I asked to take it on notice. I need to go back and check, particularly around the cybersecurity, because there's a lot of work being done in this area at the time.

ANSWER

It is the responsibility of each agency to authenticate terminals.

NSW Ambulance has completed authentication testing with the assistance of the Telco Authority and will complete authentication of about 7,500 radio terminals using Link Layer Authentication by January 2025.

In a technical sense the radios can be cloned, however, the Link Layer Authentication prevents the clone from accessing the network.

QUESTION 3 – Page 15

The CHAIR: Are there instances where the rollout of the CCEP has specifically covered those black spots and you've been able to cover those new areas?

PETER ELLIOTT: I'll just clarify. We have black spots in shopping centres, in hospitals and anywhere there is vast amounts of concrete. I'd just like to put this caveat in: There's always going to be a black spot somewhere. The best option is, though, to maximise the response coverage. In the areas that we're talking about, there would certainly be spots — and I'm happy to provide that information to you if I can — that have demonstrated the improvement in radio communications in the areas where the footprint is.

The CHAIR: Yes, I think that would be helpful. I guess we're just trying to get granular and have data around the benefits that the CCEP has brought. Conceptually, and by people talking, I think we understand the benefit that it brings. It would be nice to have some data around those benefits.

PETER ELLIOTT: Yes. Maybe a map to show you the coverage — where it used to be, where we had problems and one that actually shows where the enhanced footprint is now?

The CHAIR: Yes, that would be terrific, and any maps that show black spots, whether they are in a building because there is too much concrete, as you say, or whether they're just so remote that there is no coverage from anything.

ANSWER

The indoor and outdoor handheld coverage along with vehicle coverage has increased and is projected to increase further as a result of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program (CCEP). This is demonstrated in the maps below. **Figure 1** shows coverage prior to the CCEP, **Figure 2** shows the current coverage, and **Figure 3** shows the predicted coverage at the end of the CCEP.

It should be noted that although the maps indicate new areas of improved coverage, there will always be small pockets of coverage issues because of the limitations of radio signal to penetrate things such as thick concrete.

NSW Ambulance paramedics and support staff can report on radio reception issues through the Incident Management System. Where reception issues occur at high-frequency locations,

NSW Ambulance has worked with other agencies to install radio base station repeaters using BAU, SSKO, CCEP or other funding. This has included, or will include, townships, hospitals, tunnels, shopping centres, airports and in railway stations.

A list of completed and future sites is provided for the Committee members' information in **TAB A**. This information is confidential and should not be published with these responses.

Figure 1

GRN Coverage Pre-CCEP (2016)

48 Greater Metropolitan Area (GMA) Sites

Network designed for contiguous vehicle cover
(excluding National Parks)

Key

- Vehicle Cover
- Handheld Outdoor Cover
- Handheld Indoor Cover
- GMA Site
- Other Site

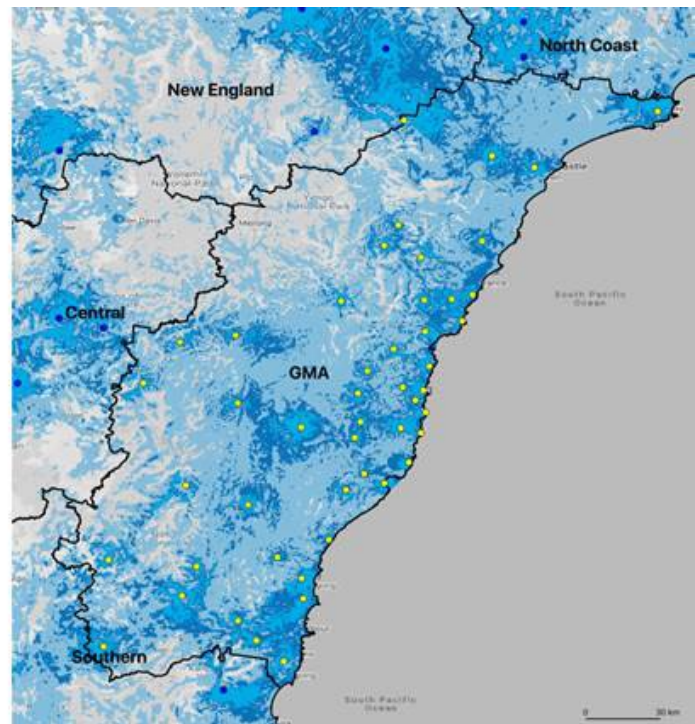


Figure 2

GRN Coverage April 2024

134 Greater Metropolitan Area (GMA) Sites

Uplift in hand held cover in urban areas

Key

- Vehicle Cover
- Handheld Outdoor Cover
- Handheld Indoor Cover
- GMA Site
- Other Site

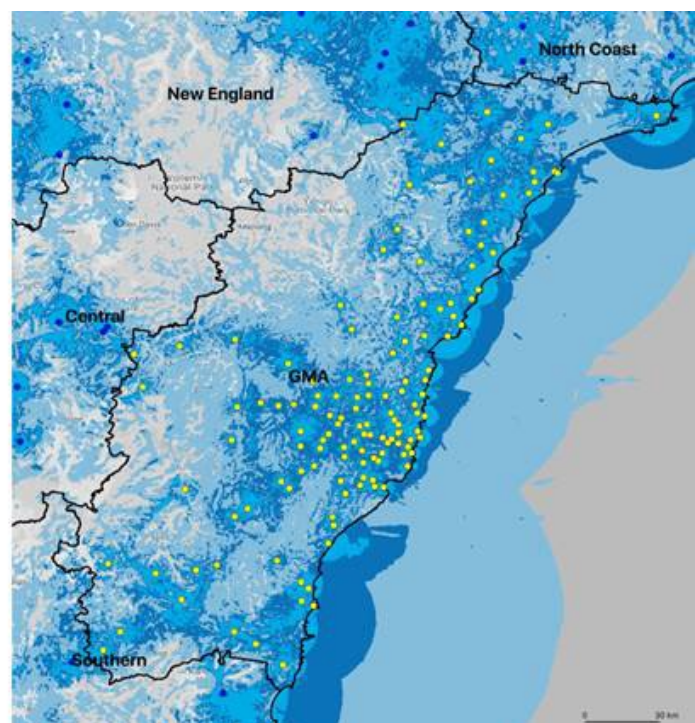


Figure 3

GRN Coverage
CCEP end state

161 Greater Metropolitan Area (GMA)
Sites

Network designed for contiguous handheld
outdoor cover in urban areas

Key

- Vehicle Cover
- Handheld Outdoor Cover
- Handheld Indoor Cover
- GMA Site
- Other Site

