

Answers to supplementary questions: NSW Rural Fire Service Association

Following discussions with Mr Campbell, I provide his responses to the Committee's supplementary questions below.

If I could summarise in a sentence – the PSN is great for our members, but the rollout has been frustratingly slow.

Thanks

Greg

- 1. How does the Association think infrastructure delivery can be improved to ensure that important user requirements, like the refresh of the paging network, are maintained in the scope of a project throughout the delivery process?*

We do not purport to have any expertise in the delivery of infrastructure. We are firefighters, and our concerns are directed to having the most effective possible system to ensure we have access to reliable information to do our jobs well, and safely. Questions of this nature would be better addressed to those with experience in major infrastructure projects.

- 2. Page 2 of the Association's submission, notes that that "... the CCEP represents an opportunity to improve community and emergency worker (including volunteer) safety, by increasing the effectiveness of communications during critical incidents." From the Association's experience, how can this benefit be effectively measured, and is this occurring?*

From our point of view the best measure would be the extent of the coverage area of the system. Where it can match or exceed the existing / previous network this is a significant advantage for the safety of our members and the community. This follows automatically because PSN coverage facilitates automatic vehicle location (AVL) for the RFS fleet, which is a useful tool for operational management, and critical for firefighter safety.

That said, coverage needs to be assessed practically. Most people are familiar with the experience of mobile phone black spots in areas that theoretically have coverage. In areas that are yet to be switched over to the PSN and where there is some PSN infrastructure, anecdotal experience indicates that the PSN will resolve most black spots in our existing radio coverage. While we have not had many reports of black spots in areas that have been switched over to the PSN, there should be a clear mechanism to ensure that any black spots in the theoretical coverage area of the PSN are recorded and addressed.

3. *If not, how does the Association think the assessment of this benefit could be measured?*

See above.

4. *What concerns, if any, has the Association's members raised about the delivery of the CCEP program?*

The most common concern about the CCEP that we hear from members is the lack of access to the PSN in areas where it is yet to be completed. This seems to be primarily driven by concern about the lack of access to AVL, and a desire to have access to the improved coverage areas promised by the PSN.

5. *If the Association's members have raised concerns, how effectively are their concerns about this program being considered? And by whom?*

Given the lack of specific concerns (beyond a desire for the program to be completed sooner) this is not relevant.

6. The Auditor-General made six recommendations to the NSW Telco Authority on page 8 of the report, Management of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program, on the management of the CCEP. Is the Association and its members satisfied that these recommendations are being adequately addressed?

While we are aware that the Telco Authority has been working with officials within the RFS, we do not have insight into the particulars of these efforts, so are unable to provide specific advice in relation to this question.

7. Who, in the Association's option, has primary responsibility for managing the CCEP?

It is difficult to consider that anyone other than the Telco Authority, and the Minister responsible for the Authority from time to time, are primarily responsible for managing the CCEP.

We recognise that given the impacts on a range of emergency service organisations, it makes sense for the CCEP to be managed in some central way by government, rather than within any individual agency.