Spectrum for public safety agencies

Joint Media Release

Attorney-General
Minister for Emergency Management
The Hon Nicola Roxon MP

Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
Senator The Hon Stephen Conroy

29 October 2012

Australia's police, fire, ambulance and emergency services will have greater access to effective communication channels during disasters following the announcement today that 10MHz of spectrum will be available to the States and Territories as a dedicated channel for emergency services.

Attorney-General Nicola Roxon and Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Stephen Conroy said this important boost to Australia's emergency response infrastructure follows a request by the Government to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) for a dedicated emergency services spectrum.

"We';re focused on ensuring our emergency response agencies have the tools they need in an emergency," Ms Roxon said

"Ensuring authorities can communicate effectively on a reliable network during a disaster is critical and the decision by ACMA to dedicate part of our communications network to emergency services is a welcome one.

"The Commonwealth will now commence negotiations with the States and Territories to reach agreement ahead of the Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management in November.

"The implementation of this network is a long term project that will occur over coming years and once operational it will assist State and Territory emergency services to respond faster and more effectively to disasters."

Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Stephen Conroy explained that the ACMA has identified 10MHz of spectrum in the 800 MHz band.

"The Government considers the allocation of spectrum from the 800 MHz band to be the best option to meet the communication needs of our public safety agencies," Senator Conroy said.

The Government's offer to the States of the spectrum will be at a negotiated price and conditional on a number of factors, including:

- the capability being nationally interoperable
- the States and Territories funding all costs associated with designing, building, equipping, maintaining and operating the capability; and
- an agreement to provide reasonable access to State and Territory networks by relevant Commonwealth agencies.

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