

Public Accounts Committee

ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES FOR DECISION-MAKING FOR THE DELIVERY OF
MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE, CONTRACTING OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND/OR THE
PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS IN NSW

Public hearing: 11 June 2024

Witness: Assistant Commissioner Stacey Maloney APM
Commander, Technology and Communication Services Command, NSW Police Force

Responses to Supplementary Questions

QUESTION 1: How does the NSW Police Force monitor and report on the impacts of the delayed implementation of the Critical Communication Enhancement Program (CCEP)?

ANSWER

The NSW Police Force (NSWPF) has maintained active participation on various NSWTA CCEP committees where progress is monitored, and feedback is provided. These meetings include:

- NSWTA Board
- Program Steering Committee
- Program Control Group
- Service Delivery Group

The NSWPF has contributed to independent CCEP reviews, and since 2022 the NSWPF has met formally with the NSWTA on a monthly basis to progress the case for the migration to the PSN in the Greater Sydney Area. The NSWTA funds a NSWPF employee to perform liaison and communication functions between the agencies. Internal briefings provide updates and advice to the NSWPF Executive on the PSN and related issues.

QUESTION 2: How has the delivery of the CCEP reduced NSW Police Force's costs to maintain its own communications system?

ANSWER

The NSWPF has not seen realised savings out of the delivery of the CCEP given it continues to use the Police Radio Network in its full capacity. The NSWPF has been able to utilise the PSN for specialist areas over the past 18 months or as a redundancy network during short term (planned and unplanned) outages.

QUESTION 3: What additional costs has NSW Police Force incurred to maintain its own system due to the delayed delivery of the CCEP?

ANSWER

The NSWPF has been required to pay to maintain the NSWPF Radio Network whilst awaiting the delayed delivery of the CCEP. The NSWPF Radio Network operating costs for FY 2023/2024 were \$15.287 million. The delayed delivery of the CCEP has required the NSWPF to continue to bid for and expend capital, recurrent funding and resources to ensure the ongoing operation of the Police Radio Network (PRN). This includes the Sydney Metro Refresh (2019 – 2021, \$19.12m), ACMA Compliance (2019 – 2022, \$6.875m), Southern Region Refresh (2023-2027, \$26.587m). Future projected costs include the Grafton Network Refresh (2025-2027, approx. \$8m) and the Western Region Network Refresh (2027 – 2029, approx. \$21m). Note that the NSWPF will be required to pay for terminals, consoles, licenses, and other infrastructure even if fully migrated to the PSN.

QUESTION 4: Since the start of the CCEP, have NSW Police Force's core user charges increased? If so, are these increases matched by enhanced service?

ANSWER

The NSWPF is not a core user of the PSN. The NSWPF pays a user fee to allow access to the PSN for specialist units. This commenced at around \$750k in 2014. In FY 2023-2024 this amount was \$1.6 million.

QUESTION 5: Does NSW Police Force measure and report on whether the proposed benefits of the CCEP have been realised?

ANSWER

The NSWPF is briefed on the progress of the CCEP through regular meetings with the NSWTA including the NSWTA Board, the CCEP Steering Committee and other formal engagements and reporting. The NSWPF utilises data provided in those forums to inform its understandings of any benefits. Since 2022, the NSWPF has been assisting with the development of the PSN in the Greater Sydney Area. Through this uplift process the benefits of PSN coverage are being realised.

QUESTION 6: What is NSW Police Force's view on the public reporting on the benefits realisation for the CCEP?

ANSWER

The NSWPF supports public reporting on the benefits realisation for the CCEP.

QUESTION 7: Is there anything that is not currently reported to the public or to your agency, that NSW Police Force think should be reported?

ANSWER

No.

QUESTION 8: Page 6, of the Auditor-General's report to Parliament, Management of the Critical Communications Enhancement Program, noted that all ESOs required that the enhanced Public Safety Network should have the capability to authenticate terminals to prevent cloning of terminals. What risks or adverse outcomes could your operations face if unauthorised persons are able to clone terminals and access the Public Safety Network?

ANSWER

A person who attempts to use a cloned NSWPF radio would be able to broadcast but not be able to receive or hear any other police transmissions. A person with access to the network may disrupt operational policing activities by speaking, or by pressing radio buttons repeatedly to interfere with broadcasts on a network that at best prevents officers from communicating and at worst deliberately prevents them from coordinating a response to a serious or life-threatening incident.

The safety of NSWPF officers and the public may also be placed at risk if a member of the public with a cloned radio purported to be a police officer and initiated non-genuine requests for help. Alternately they may purport themselves to be an officer in a position of authority and direct police to time wasting or inappropriate tasks. The NSWPF is fully supportive of authentication of radios into the NSW PSN. NSWPF is authenticating all NSWPF radio terminals in the 2024 calendar year with the assistance of the NSWTA. NSWPF radios can be cloned on the PSN Radio Network but encryption cannot be breached. Authentication on the PSN will see cease cloning of NSWPF Radios.

QUESTION 9: The Auditor-General reported, on page 3, that 'there is a risk that radio interoperability between ESOs will not be maximised because the NSW Telco Authority has not settled with ESOs how encryption will be used across the enhanced PSN.'

If this risk is realised:

a. How would this impact NSW Police Force's operations?

ANSWER

The NSWPF will be able to operate on the PSN on encrypted channels as it does now. The NSWPF is and will continue to be able to communicate with other ESOs operationally on non-encrypted channels. However, it will be required to restrict the personal and sensitive information it communicates.

b. How has NSW Police Force worked with the Telco Authority to address this risk?

ANSWER

The NSWPF has assisted NSWTA with advice and insight into NSWPF experience with OTAR (over the air encryption) to assist NSWTA in determining whole of PSN encryption. The NSWPF does not require NSWTA oversight or authority to use encryption on the PSN. Encryption is an agency managed solution for agencies who wish to use it. Note that other state PSN networks are fully encrypted end to end.

Question 10: Page 6, of the Auditor-General's report, noted that ESOs will decommission their own radio communication networks and migrate entirely to the PSN. We understand that this means ESOs will depend entirely on the NSW Telco Authority to provide their primary mission critical communications. Does NSW Police Force have any concerns regarding governance arrangements after its radio networks are decommissioned and NSW Police Force completes its migration to the PSN?

ANSWER

The NSWPF will be reliant upon the NSWTA providing timely responses to repair or remediate network outages that impact its ability to operate as an ESO or law enforcement agency. The NSWPF will require a level of service to ensure it has access to a reliable operational network in all environmental conditions. The NSWPF acknowledges that these arrangements are still to be determined. The NSWPF is currently satisfied with the proposed governance arrangements and will continue to provide input into the several NSWTA delivery and customer service meetings it is engaged in.

Question 11: The Committee understands there is a self-service portal linked to the CCEP project schedule database that allows stakeholders to access project data at any point in time. Does your agency interact with this portal and what has been its experience with it?

Yes, the NSWPF finds this to be a practical tool that assists with planning for Greater Sydney Area migration and the Police Critical Communications Work Program – Radio Infrastructure.

Question 12: The Auditor-General made several recommendations to the NSW Telco Authority as outlined on page 8 of their report. Is NSW Police Force satisfied that these recommendations are being addressed?

ANSWER

Recommendations

The NSW Telco Authority should (in consultation with the Emergency Services Organisations):

1. by October 2023, finalise its PSN Traffic Mitigation Plan and determine a schedule and method by which that plan will be tested.

Response: The NSWPF has agreed to the PSN Traffic Mitigation Plan but is seeking to be informed further about testing outcomes.

2. by December 2023, review whether current or planned governance arrangements for the enhanced PSN are adequate and appropriate for the evolving relationship between agencies, including to support ongoing collaboration and communication.

Response: The NSWPF is satisfied with current governance arrangements. The NSWPF notes that migration (in the GSA) has not yet occurred and final operational arrangements have not been completed.

3. by January 2024, work with other relevant NSW government agencies to provide advice to the NSW Government on the options, benefits and costs of addressing the regulatory gap for in-building public safety communications coverage in new and existing buildings.

Response: The NSWPF is aware of a new directive from Infrastructure NSW but is mindful this will only apply to NSW Government owned buildings/facilities and not residential towers/high rise dwellings or commercial places of mass gathering like shopping centres. These latter locations require the same level of coverage to ensure police and public safety.

4. by March 2024, consider what, if any, technical and governance arrangements are required for circumstances where operational communications requires both encryption and interoperability.

Response: The NSWPF is waiting on a full encryption solution for the PSN to be developed.

The NSW Telco Authority should:

5. ensure that it complies with its Infrastructure Capacity Reservation Policy

Response: The NSWPF notes the concerns previously raised in the audit report and is seeking greater clarity from the NSWTA on what capacity reservation arrangements are in place across the PSN given anecdotal evidence of capacity limitations at certain sites.

6. expedite the mitigation of the risk of cloning of unauthenticated terminals by taking the following steps:
 - a. by October 2023, implement interim strategies to identify and address the risk of cloned terminals.
 - b. by June 2024, require that authentication-capable terminals be authenticated.
 - c. by June 2025, require that all terminals using the enhanced PSN be authenticated.

Response: The NSWPF has been engaged on this risk and is satisfied with planned arrangements.