TRANSCRIPT – INFORMATION SESSION: TELCO SECTOR RISK AND RESILIENCE PROFILE

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SPEAKERS

Johanna Weaver

Johanna Weaver 06.30

Hi, everyone, thanks for joining us today for the session. We're delighted to be here, to do this information session about the Risk and Resilience Profile for the telco sector.

SLIDE 1

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Johanna Weaver. I am a professor at the Australian National University. And I am also the Director of the Tech Policy Design Centre here at ANU. We've been asked by the Department of Communications, Regional Transport, Development and Communications to lead this work on the Telco Sector Risk and Resilience profile.

The project itself will kick off in earnest next year, but we wanted to hold this information session just to give people a bit of an overview of the project and really to emphasise the opportunities, that there will be many of them for opportunities for engagement and participation from a broad cross section of stakeholders through this project.

We'll do this session in a fairly traditional way for the moment. We'll do an overview with some slides providing, you know, some information about the scope of the project, the way that we intend to run the project, the timeline, etc. Then there'll be an opportunity at the end for people to ask questions. So, if you have any questions that come up, please feel free to pop them into the q&a. And we will respond to them, potentially as people, as you put the questions. There will also be an opportunity at the end for those who might want to ask questions for you to have the floor to put your question forward.

We are recording this session, and we'll make it available for those who weren't able to make it today. I know, it's terrible timing, I was told by my team that today is peak Christmas party day. But as I said, the intention of this is really just to provide an overview for everyone of the project that will kick off in earnest in the new year.

SLIDE 2

The overall objective of this exercise is to develop an all-hazards sector wide telecommunications and resilience profile. And there's two really key important parts here. One is all hazards, and the other is sector wide. We know that there is a lot of work that has been already going on in relation to risk and resilience, which I think, you know, if you had to pick a buzzword in Canberra at the moment, resilience

certainly is one of them. What we're doing with this project is looking at the risk and resilience profile of the telco sector as a whole.

So, many of the existing bodies of work that had been done have focused on particular hazards, for example, the inquiry after the bushfires. Or they're focused on particular sectors, or elements of the sector, whereas what we're doing with this project is really looking at it from that all hazards and sector wide profile. And the end product of this, you know, the key output, will be a risk and resilience profile for the Australian Telco sector. And that will really form an evidence base to inform policy development and design from government but also for industry. So really encourage everyone to see this as an opportunity to input into an independent evidence base that will help to shape policy in this space going forward.

SLIDE 3

From an all hazards perspective, we're really looking at this encompassing things like natural disasters, systemic failures, and human driven disruption, and things like cyber attacks, etc. We are also looking at positive case studies as well. So, you know, I think the way the telco sector managed and responded in the face of the pandemic, is, you know, a really positive example of how the resilience of the sector really shone. And so what lessons can we learn from that? And it's really saying, in all of these things, whether we are talking about natural disasters, extreme weather events, etc, cyber incidents, or, you know, the positive case studies, there's something to learn from each one of these, and what are the lessons that we can take out of those so that we can provide that evidence base that I was talking about earlier.

When we say sector wide, we will be looking here at industry. So the telco providers themselves, broader utility providers, so some of the initial conversations that we've been having, for example, people have emphasised the importance of engaging with the energy sector. Obviously, we'll be engaging with government, both at the state and the federal level, emergency services, and the risk and disaster management community, and also academia, civil society. We really, this is something that, again, is a point of difference with this body of work. We're not looking at it from one particular perspective. We're not just looking at it from you know, a national security perspective, for example, and we're not just looking at it through one particular lens. We're looking at it in that holistic perspective.

SLIDE 4

We want it to be really clear with everybody about the boundaries of this work, because you can see that it would quite easily become something that is all encompassing. So we're really focusing here on the resilience of the telco sector, in the face of significant events. So we're not looking at business as usual resilience, for example, we're looking at, how do we ensure resilience in the face of significant events in areas where there is already connectivity?

I know that there is a lot of work that is going on in terms of rural and regional areas, and you know, the coverage and connectivity issues in those areas. We will be looking at resilience in rural and remote communities where the connectivity already exists. If it's where we're looking at expanding connectivity, or a question about whether the connectivity should or shouldn't be there, that's something that is within the scope of a separate, quite extensive body of work that's going on.

SLIDE 5

Just to emphasise the scope, and the way that the project will work. And just seeing Jeffrey, your question there about do significant events include cyber or other threat actors? Yes, absolutely they do. Where it is a significant not business as usual cyber incident, for example.

The project itself will run in five stages. The first stage, which we will kick off in earnest in the new year, is establishing the context. So this is really where we're going to very clearly work with everyone in the community to understand what work has already been done, what work is ongoing; there's a number of different initiatives that are ongoing across government, but also ongoing work, we know, across industry as well. So we really want to map both the work that has been done so we can build on that rather than repeat it and duplicate it. And we really want to understand the existing work that is going on so that we can complement and force multiply that work again, rather than duplicating work that is already underway.

So that first stage also will be the stage at which we seek specific participation from the broader community in the form of nominations for the risk expert panel, which I'll talk about in a moment. And also in the form of seeking your views and input into a number of focus groups that we will be establishing to aid and assist the project and the work. I'll talk about both the risk expert panel and the focus groups more in a moment, I just want to do the overview of the project as a whole first. So the first stage is really if you like information gathering, understanding the broad context in which the telco sector is operating, but which resilience as already being considered.

Then we'll move into phase two, and this sort of a little bit goes to Jeffrey's question as well. It's looking at risk identification. So we will spend a couple of months at this point getting into the really nitty gritty and identifying what are the risks and threats that we will be looking at for the purposes of this project. And so that risk identification phase, just the identification of the risks, is the intent and purpose of the second stage of the project.

Once we've identified the risks, we'll then move on to stage three, which is really where the meat of the work for this project will begin. So we will then take each of the risks that we've identified above and that may, obviously will include cyber, it will include things like bushfires, you can see potential work around subsea cables, for example. We will as a community and, I hope with everyone on this call, and work to identify what those risks are. And then in the second stage, we'll be looking at the analysis and evaluation of those risks. So what information do we have, what evidence do we have of those risks? How likely are those risks to occur? And really getting, you know, quite a comprehensive analysis then, of what those risks are, and the potential impact of those risks if they were to eventuate. And this is really where I encourage everyone through this process to see this as an opportunity to help us to form the independent evidence base. So the end product of this will take into account the outputs from each one of these stages.

And when we get to stage four, we will take the analysis that we've done in stage three, where we've looked at what those risks are, the likelihood and the impact of those risks if they were to eventuate. And then we'll have an entire separate section where we say, okay, what are the treatments that we can apply to those risks, the mitigations, if you like, and then the analysis of the potential impact again, once those mitigations are in place. That will take into account things like, you know, one of the things that's come up in some of the initial discussions is, it is possible, for example, to put mitigations in place to prevent some of these risks, but the costs are quite considerable. And so this is the opportunity to say, look, yes, there is a risk, yes, the risk of this occurring is significant, but actually, the cost of putting in place the mitigation of that risk may outweigh the benefit that could be gained. And so that's really getting into that cost-benefit analysis, and again, providing the independent evidence base to support that.

Then we'll have stage five, where we compile essentially all of the information and the outputs that we've received through the other stages into the risk and resilience profile. So that's the actual drafting work of it.

SLIDE 6

So the methodology as we go through each one of these phases will be quite systematic. It will follow the same methodology through each one of the phases. So the first thing will be that we have the project team preparing the provisional papers. We'll then have the focus groups meet, consider the papers, critique the papers, rip them to pieces, as I'm sure will be the case. Tell us everything that we've got wrong, provide us with more information. And then we will refine those papers, and we'll go to the risk expert panel. And then we'll finalise and have an end product at each one of those stages. Josh, yes, you're absolutely right, we will be using ISO 3100 as the reference and the framework for the work that we're doing with this.

SLIDE 7

In terms of the way that the project, the governance, and I've been mentioning here, the risk expert panel, and the focus groups, and we will, there are a number of different levels of governance of the project. The first level is the steering committee. This is chaired by the Department. And the focus of the steering committee really is are we delivering the project on time and on budget. We then have the project team, which is my team at the Tech Policy Design Centre. And the project team really is, we're responsible for the independent delivery of the substance of the project, and we'll come again to the independence of this work, because it really is important and the point of difference, I think, from many of the other ongoing bodies of work.

Of most importance though, to this group, we have the two bottom bodies, if you like, the risk expert panel and the focus groups. We'll be seeking nominations for both of these groups from stakeholders in February 2023. And this is really asking for the community to nominate if you would like to be a part of either of these groups.

So the risk expert panel, we'll be looking, will be the sort of main advisory panel that works with us throughout the project. To say, okay, we're interested in every dimension of the project and we will be effectively working with us and signing off each stage of the project.

The focus groups in distinction to the risk expert panel, the focus groups will focus on particular areas. So for example, I imagine we will have a focus group on cyber threats, we will have a focus group, for example, on extreme weather. The focus groups themselves, we will ascertain which focus groups, the subject matter of those focus groups will be by consulting with all of our stakeholders, which we'll do in early February.

Once we've got the stakeholder groups, once we've got the focus groups identified, we'll then put out the call for nominations. And if you'd like, the difference between the focus group and the risk expert panel is that the focus groups will engage on a particular narrow element, so cyber, whereas the risk expert panel will focus on all of the elements. And so you know, it really is an opportunity for people who perhaps want to be involved in the entirety of the project, then you're probably more inclined to be engaged on the risk expert panel. If you have a particular area of specialisation, you know, for example, if you've done a lot of work on bushfire resilience, you might, perhaps want to nominate for one of those focus groups. And so it allows for the different levels of engagement and participation.

Jeffrey, on your point, you're asking, is the only way for you to engage through the risk expert panels or the focus groups? It is absolutely not the only way for you to engage, there will be the opportunity for interested parties to lodge submissions. And if we can skip to the next slide, which will actually be not the next one, thank you. Actually, we'll come to the specific next steps for you on that question Jeffery, in a couple of slides. But there are plenty of other opportunities. But the risk expert panel and the focus groups really are going to be pivotal for us to run this project in a way that really makes and takes the

depth of expertise that this community has to ensure that we have a product at the end, that really, really stands up as an independent piece of work.

What I really want to emphasise with this slide is the participant charter and the way that we will be treating information or data that is gathered during the course of this project. So, we'll have a number of opportunities for stakeholder meetings for engagement, whether it be you know, roundtables, virtual, in-person, submission opportunities, all of the information that is provided to us will be provided under Chatham House Rule. That means that no stakeholder will be identified in the final study without your express consent. So any of the information that is provided will be taken to inform the study. But we won't be naming particular organisations, unless you, for example, nominate to provide a specific case study for us and engage. All information that is collected and provided to the Tech Policy Design Centre here at ANU will be used for the purposes of this study only.

While the Department is funding this project, information provided to us will be provided for the purpose of ANU conducting and compiling the independent evidence base for this study will not be passed on to anyone else for any other purpose. And I think that's a really important part for people to you know, a reassurance for people that that the purpose for which the information is collected. And for those once we get more into the meat of the project, any information, data etc. that is provided to us will also be held securely. So we'll be using a data storage facility which most people probably know as Safe Share, but is now called Cocoon Data. This is IRAP and ASD certified in terms of the security of the information handling, with Safe Share. So you know, we are taking this very seriously in terms of ensuring that we are, you know, protecting the information that is provided to us. And we hope that in doing so that we really gather, as we say, that that very strong independent evidence base.

SLIDE 8
So the final risk and resilience profile that we have out of this will be the independent evidence base for future policy decisions. We will seek endorsement of this by both the risk expert panel and the steering group. And we want to emphasise that the editorial discretion over the final product does rest with us at ANU rather than for example, with the Department. Obviously, we want the Department and all of you, very importantly, to endorse our final product. But this will be an independent piece of research. And it's actually its independence which brings its value. So, being able to engage with this, have your views represented in this, have your concerns represented, have the opportunities, the risks, the mitigations, engaged and represented in this document, we hope people see as a real opportunity for you to be able to help shape future policymaking both within government and within industry in this space.

SLIDE 9
So the next step for engagement will be a questionnaire that we circulate in the second week of February. And we're very conscious of not sending stuff out over the Christmas and holiday period. So we won't be in touch with you. We'll be doing a lot of work in the early New Year. But we won't be reaching out to this group until early February. At that point, we will come out to you with a questionnaire that's seeking really the baselining exercise, as we said, to really understand the work that has already gone on, the work that is ongoing, useful sources of information, and also in that questionnaire to really seek your views of the community, which holds you know, the expertise and the knowledge in this space, about what areas we should be having the focus groups on. So, that questionnaire will be really pivotal in terms of shaping the overall project.

We encourage people, please, to the extent that you have the capacity to do so, if you can respond and provide us with fulsome responses to that, we would really appreciate that. At the same time, as we go out with the questionnaire, we'll also be seeking nominations for the risk expert panel, this being the group that will really act as you know, our expert advisory panel through this process. We won't, in the

second week of February be calling for nominations for the focus groups, because the focus groups will in part be determined by your responses to the questionnaire. But we will shortly thereafter be coming out seeking focus group nominations.

And the other thing I wanted to flag upfront here is that we will in phase one and phase two of the project also have a number of case studies. So these will be case studies focusing on the resilience of particular elements, or of the telco sector. So, really wanting also here to put out a call of expression of interest for the case studies and people who might be interested in engaging with us to develop a number of those case studies to help inform the risk identification element of the project. So these are the next steps. The specific opportunities, as I said, for those who are, you know, really keen to be involved in this project and a really hands on way the risk expert panel is your best way to do that.

Then we have the focus groups, but we will also have a number of opportunities, the questionnaire being the first, but there will be a number of other opportunities as we go through the project to provide input and submissions as the project evolves.

SLIDE 10
For those of you who would like to remain in contact for the project, we have this stakeholder mailing list. I think most of the people who are attending this session should be already on our stakeholder list. If you're not, please send us an email to techpolicydesigncentre@anu.edu.au. And we will add you to the stakeholder list. That's the easiest way to stay in touch. We'll be sending out regular updates, providing notice and opportunities for engagement. We also have on our website, a dedicated page for this project. So if you go to techpolicydesign.au, we have a Projects tab at the top. And if you just then navigate to the Telco Sector Risk and Resilience Profile, that's where we will put updates, we'll put a video of this session up on that site, and also the slides that I've used today.

So if you have colleagues who are at their Christmas parties, it will be sort of an easy resource for them to be able to access throughout the life of the project. But we'll also keep updating that and providing information through the project. It will be, you know, a transparent and iterative project as we go through. And, you know, these are the best ways for you to for you to keep in touch.

That I believe is the conclusion of the formal part of the presentation. I hope that that is the longest amount of talking in the life of the project that you will have from me. We really recognise that the expertise for this project very much sits within the stakeholders who are here with us today, and many others who are out there in the community. And the role of the Tech Policy Design Centre, if you like, is as a facilitator, to bring people together to collate the knowledge and then to bring this together in that final sector risk and resilience profile.

So, this is your opportunity to ask any questions that you might have. I've got a couple of questions here. For anyone who'd like to ask your question, please feel free to also raise your hand and then we can give you the mic.

For Leanne, will the case studies just be focused on examples within Australia, or will international ones be welcome? I think the focus of the profile is the Australian Telco Sector. So, I wouldn't rule out international examples to the extent that they provide an example of a useful mitigation or a way to respond to a risk that is also a risk that is present in the Australian system. But certainly, the intent is for the case studies predominantly to be focused on Australian challenges.

We have one from an anonymous attendee, will you be approaching large telcos for nominations through their government relations channels? We will be putting out an open call for nominations. We

will be seeking nominations from the large telcos from the small telcos from, you know, emergency services, from academia, from, you know, it's an open call. And we will also be putting out calls through the existing channels that exist through the Department as well. So, yes, we will. And that's, you know, it's obviously important for us to have the engagement of the telco sector in the project.

And then we have Narelle Clark, who is asking, how are we defining telecommunications and the telco sector? So we are including telecommunications and digital services that are running directly off the telecommunication sector. I'm not trying to dodge your question Narelle. But actually, in part, the getting a really sharp answer to that will be part of the objective of stage one of the project, which is establishing the context and defining the scope. And so we actually want to hear from you, how would you define the telco sector? And what do you think should be the boundaries? That's not a cop out, it really is, we know that that is a subject of much discussion and much interest. And we want to make sure that we get that right. And that is, you know, one of the primary focuses of the, of stage one of the project.

Have we got any other questions? Thank you, John, always good to know when you think something is useful. Fred is asking about whether overseas telco regulators will participate in the project. Look, we will be engaging widely in the project. We are, to our knowledge, the first country to do a sector wide risk and resilience profile for the telco sector. It's common in other sectors, for example, in the aviation sector, but it's not something that is commonly done much to my surprise, actually, of all of the telco sector. So, you know, we expect there will be quite a lot of international interest in this project. And we also hope towards the end of the project that we can develop a guide for doing this, for developing a sector risk profile for the telco sector, and for others, to be able to also use.

Then we've got a question here from Andrew Crouch, saying that the examples of stakeholders seem entirely to be suppliers, service providers and government more broadly, what about an emphasis on customers, i.e those stakeholder groups that are affected by the lack of resilience in any given area? Yeah, absolutely. So, that's entirely my fault if I've given that impression that the customers or the end users. They are a very important stakeholder in this process, and both from a consumer group perspective, but also from individuals who may wish to engage in the process that will very much again be a stakeholder community that have an important contribution to make to this project. So apologies if I've given a misimpression on that respect.

Josh Maxwell is asking, can I get you to brief the telco Tizen communication sector group in early 2023? Absolutely. We can certainly arrange that. That sounds great. And also, I think, you know, the Tizen Comms group is an example of one existing stakeholder group and network that we hope to tap into through this project. And I know that there are many others as well, including through a number of the industry organisations, the consumer organisations, for example. And so the idea, again, for this is that we don't want to reinvent the wheel where these networks and mechanisms already exist. We want to work with you to get the most out of those groups that that already exist.

Fred's question here is, will the telcos be required to share risks that have been identified in their risks and governments governance programmes? This is an independent research project, we have no powers of compulsion. So it really will be up to the telcos to engage with us. I would say, though, that the initial responses that we've had, from the large telco providers from the telco sector, and when I say that I'm meaning very much the industry providers, so the narrow definition, has been really positive. The benefit of this type of project is that we will go through all of the different stages and provide an independent, balanced assessment at the end. That is in the interests of the telco sector for us to represent their views and their concerns and the opportunities that are here. Well, you know, my commitment to this group is that we will do everything we can to ensure that the end product is

thorough, that it is based on evidence and in the evidence will provide that evidence, but that it will also be balanced and independent. And, you know, regardless of which element of the community you represent, I hope that you all see that as an opportunity, because this project will only be as good as the inputs and the engagement that we have from the community. So, there's no compulsion. But we hope that people see that it's in their interests to engage with us through this project. And will users of telcos be participating in the project, from Fred. Yes, the will be. We really will, you know, the participation for this is open. And so part of the challenge for us, and which we, you know, ask for the assistance of the people who are on this call or engaged in this field is to help us to spread the word about the project and to encourage people to engage in the project. So, participation is not limited to any group. And, you know, broader the participation that we can have means that we have a depth of, the final product will have that depth and breadth, which will make it stand apart.

We have a comment from Adam Foy. Going back to the first question, please consider overseas based events, some Australian telcos have overseas operations, and rely on overseas suppliers, and an event may include political instability in elections, etc. Overseas based event may have an impact on the industry. Yeah, I think that's a really fair point. And like I said, this is a project that we will engage and very much seek to be guided by you. And that first phase of the project is going to be crucial. And so in terms of setting the boundaries. We will need to put boundaries in place, we can't, you know, this project can't be a project about every single thing. So we do need to make sure that we're being very intentional about that. But as we set the, you know, the limits on what is in isn't out of scope. Nothing is out of scope, when we're considering what will be in scope. Then once we've defined the scope, we'll be really rigorous in going through each one of those stages, seeking your involvement and input as we go through the stages. And hopefully, at the end, the intention will be to have a sector risk and resilience profile that has that real breadth and depth of evidence that is useful to government, that's useful to industry, that's useful to consumers, people can point to and say, you know, this is not just me from industry's perspective, or from the consumers perspective, actually, there has been this rigorous independent study that also has that perspective. And that's where, you know, the importance of having the balance, and also ensuring that we are considering all of the different perspectives and views will be really vital to the project.

Alright, folks, that's the last of the questions that I see here. I'll give it one last call for questions. As I said, please feel free to raise your hand if you have a question or pop it into the q&a as well. Otherwise, we will bring it to a close there, everyone gets to gain a few extra minutes, which are incredibly precious at this time of the year. And, as I said, we've got the information here in terms of how to get in touch with us, our email addresses there. You can also follow us on LinkedIn, or on Twitter, we'll post updates as well. But to be honest, not everything we do will be posted on LinkedIn and Twitter. So, the best way for you to stay up-to-date on the project is to ask to subscribe to the mailing list, which you can do by emailing us at techpolicydesign@anu.edu.au. And thank you so much for taking the time to engage with us and to hear this presentation. As we said will pop it up on the website. It'll be up in the early new wear, along with the slides. And if anyone has any questions that we haven't answered here today, or really importantly, suggestions on what shouldn't be in and out of scope, or ideas for case studies. Please don't hesitate to get in touch. We're really keen for this to be a project which all of the community engages with, and which you can all have a sense of ownership with as we embark upon the project. Thank you so much. And I hope everyone has a restful and restorative break. I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to a holiday, and we'll see you in 2023! Thank you.