

Telecommunications Disruption

Mark A Gregory
RMIT University

Summary: In this issue we consider how telecommunication companies around the world have been disrupted by the demand for improved network speeds, capacity and reliability, and the growth of the smart device manufacturers that have become more closely linked with the handful of global digital giants. The pace of change has increased, if that is possible, and it is not unthinkable that further consolidation of the telecommunications market might occur in the next decade.

In this issue

In this issue, the *Journal* contains papers that focus on *Public Policy*, *International Competitiveness* and *Telecommunications in Industry*, as well as a book review and an interesting historical article on *Aluminium Distribution Cabinets Resistance to Rifle Fire*. Who would have thought there was a need to protect aluminium distribution cabinets from bullets? Possibly the answer lies in our well-peppered regional road signs.

Key questions that affect the telecommunications market are discussed in this issue, including the need for further standardisation to ensure that services can be provided globally, what are the competitive pressures facing consumers and how affordable is our ever-increasing desire to remain connected.

Disruption everywhere

At a time when the thought that increased market disruption could not be possible, the leaked draft international Trade in Services Agreement highlights the roller coaster that could be just around the corner. Removal of Telstra's protection from international takeover and the potential for a foreign purchase of part or all of the National Broadband Network (NBN) later this decade should focus our attention on what might occur as the push towards increased globalisation and reduced protection for local markets.

Later this month Telstra's national Wi-Fi network will be formally launched and another giant step will have been taken along the path to improved broadband connectivity. Telstra's positive move to provide Australia with a national Wi-Fi network should, over time, force its competitors to move into this market and the end result will be a significant improvement to mobile broadband coverage.

The Federal and State governments have collaborated on the recently announced mobile cellular blackspot reduction program and regional and remote areas will begin to benefit from the rollout of new mobile cellular towers later this year. Australia is a large country and mobile cellular coverage is vital along major arteries and in key regional and remote areas, and a feature of the mobile cellular blackspot program is the requirement that facilities built using the funds provided through the blackspot program are to be available for all mobile cellular operators to use. But before we see true competition in regional and remote areas there is a need for a significant backhaul and facility usage price reduction.

Also this month we have learned that one of the key challenges for improved optical fibre communication has been achieved, heralding what is likely to be an explosive growth in low-cost optical fibre communications capacity over much longer distances than are currently possible. Australia's telecommunication companies are certain to be early adopters of improved optical fibre communications capability, due to the costs association with Australia's size and rapidly increasing demand for additional capacity.

And the second agreement between NBN and Telstra has been signed off by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, bringing to an end the 18-month process to move the NBN from being principally fibre-to-the-premises to the multi-technology-mix technology solution. Over coming months the migration from ADSL2+ to VDSL2 with vectoring should ramp up and Telstra's HFC network will be upgraded and integrated with the existing NBN.

Looking forward

Papers are invited for upcoming issues. The September issue will include two themes: *Telecommunications Policy and Regulation* and the *Internet of Things*. To round out the year the December issue will have three themes: *Economic Research*, *Telecommunication Legacy Issues* and *Universal Service Obligation*.

The hard work of the theme editors ensures that the quality of the papers included in the *Journal* are of interest to the *Journal's* readers and reflect the status quo. The Editorial Board appreciates the hard work and time that the theme editors commit to their task.

As each issue is published the Editorial Board turns its attention to future themes and it is likely that in early 2016 we will see themes on *Network Infrastructure Security*, *the NBN* and *the Economics of New Services*.

We actively seek you help to ensure that the *Journal* provides the readership with topics of interest that reflect the broad nature of the local and international telecommunications industry and the global digital economy. If you have a theme for an upcoming issue that you

would like to recommend to the Editorial Board please let us know. And papers submitted to the *Journal* are welcome and do not need to be associated with a theme issue.

Mark A Gregory