

# CommsWire

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## NBN CO YOU HAVE 3 MONTHS TO IMPROVE DEALS



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## NBN CO GIVEN 3 MONTHS TO IMPROVE RSP WHOLESAL DEALS

**NBN Co, the company rolling out Australia's national broadband network, has given the competition watchdog a court-enforceable undertaking to improve its wholesale arrangements with retail service providers within three months.**

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The undertaking was given in the context of the ACCC's inquiry into NBN wholesale service standards which was begun in late 2017 to determine whether NBN wholesale service standards are appropriate, and to consider whether regulation is necessary to improve consumer experiences.



A statement from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission said the company had offered the undertaking after being shown an interim access determination that the ACCC proposed to make.

As per the undertaking, NBN Co will pay a \$25 rebate to RSPs for each late connection and fault that is fixed.

The company will pay the same fee to an RSP for any missed appointment.

And NBN Co has agreed to simplify the process for RSPs to get rebates and also remove some conditions for claiming the rebates.

NBN Co has also said it would improve its reporting to RSPs so they can track the company's performance more easily and better support consumers in congested fixed wireless cells.

The company has also agreed to add information about the level of congestion in its fixed wireless network to the customer experience dashboard that it publishes monthly.

"The undertaking will improve the rebates that NBN Co pays to RSPs for not meeting its service level timeframes for connections, fixing faults and meeting scheduled appointments," ACCC chair Rod Sims said.

"This will lead to improved NBN connections and fault services performance overall.

"Under the undertaking given to the ACCC, NBN Co will require the RSPs to continue to take reasonable steps to ensure customers receive a benefit from the improved rebates the service providers will receive from NBN Co.

"This could mean customers could receive rebates from RSPs or other benefits, such as providing a substitute service while a fault is being fixed.

"We have had constructive engagement with NBN Co and RSPs as part of our inquiry into NBN wholesale service standards. The undertaking provides stronger incentives for NBN Co to maintain a high standard of operational performance and so will result in a clear benefit to consumers."

Communications Minister Mitch Fifield said: "Today's announcement is a win for customers on the NBN and follows extensive work by the Government to increase consumer protections and enhance user experience".

He said as a result of measures introduced by the government and NBN Co:

- Congestion across the fixed-line network has plummeted from an average of about five hours a week in July 2017 to just 28 minutes a week;
- Ninety-four percent of homes and businesses were being connected within NBN Co's timeframes; and
- Ninety-three percent of homes and businesses now had their equipment installed right the first time.

"Under the government, the NBN will be completed by 2020 – six to eight years sooner and at \$30 billion less cost than Labor," Fifield added.

Labor Shadow Communications Minister Michelle Rowland described the ACCC move as "a stinging rebuff of [Communications Minister] Mitch Fifield and his opposition to improving NBN wholesale service levels for consumers".

She said the Labor Party and the ACCC had been in the forefront of the policy debate "and Labor welcomes this result as a sensible first step".

"The interim determination by the ACCC is an endorsement of the policy direction in Labor's NBN Service Guarantee, which has been welcomed by industry and consumer groups, and is designed to improve accountability and reduce downtime on the NBN," Rowland said.

**Sam Varghese**

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## VOCUS SAYS CABLE HELPS 'SECURE' AUSTRALIA'S DIGITAL FUTURE

**Telecoms services group Vocus says its commitment to infrastructure will secure Australia's digital future on completion of the \$US170m Australia Singapore Cable (ASC).**

Vocus Chairman Bob Mansfield (below) said the company, which is part of the consortium building the ASC, had already deployed more than 23,000km of fibre optic networking across all of Australia's mainland States and Territories, as well as 11,500km of subsea cables since 2013.



The Vocus chief was speaking at a parliamentary briefing on Tuesday night in Canberra attended by Mitch Fifield, Minister for Communications and the Arts and Susan Ley, Assistant Minister for Regional Development and Territories.

"The North West Cable System from Darwin to Port Hedland services our globally-scaled energy sector and is an international gateway to economic markets to Australia's north," Mansfield said.

"The ASC establishes strategic and trade links with South East Asia and is the largest infrastructure project ever delivered by Vocus.

"We have completed it on time and under budget, exceeding specifications.

"We are immensely proud that we were able to activate the cable earlier than scheduled last week to provide emergency connectivity services when the Sea-Me-We3 submarine cable between Perth and Singapore experienced another outage."

The 4600km cable stretching from Perth to Singapore via Indonesia, will also link Christmas Island, providing high-speed connectivity to regional geographical locations previously unable to cost-effectively and reliably access these services.

Mansfield also outlined the progress on the Coral Sea Cable system, which is being constructed on behalf of the governments of Australia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

He referenced the work that Vocus was doing with the Northern Territory government to build a new submarine fibre optic cable to the Tiwi Islands.

"These multi-million infrastructure projects represent our commitment to meeting customer demand and recognises the growing requirements for affordable and trusted connectivity with our closest Asian trading partners," Mansfield said.

"With this new infrastructure capability, Australia moves from being an end point on the global telecommunications grid to a viable transit point between the networks of Asia and North America, bringing more opportunities for trade and making us more competitive."

**Peter Dinham**



# John de Ridder

Telecommunications Economist

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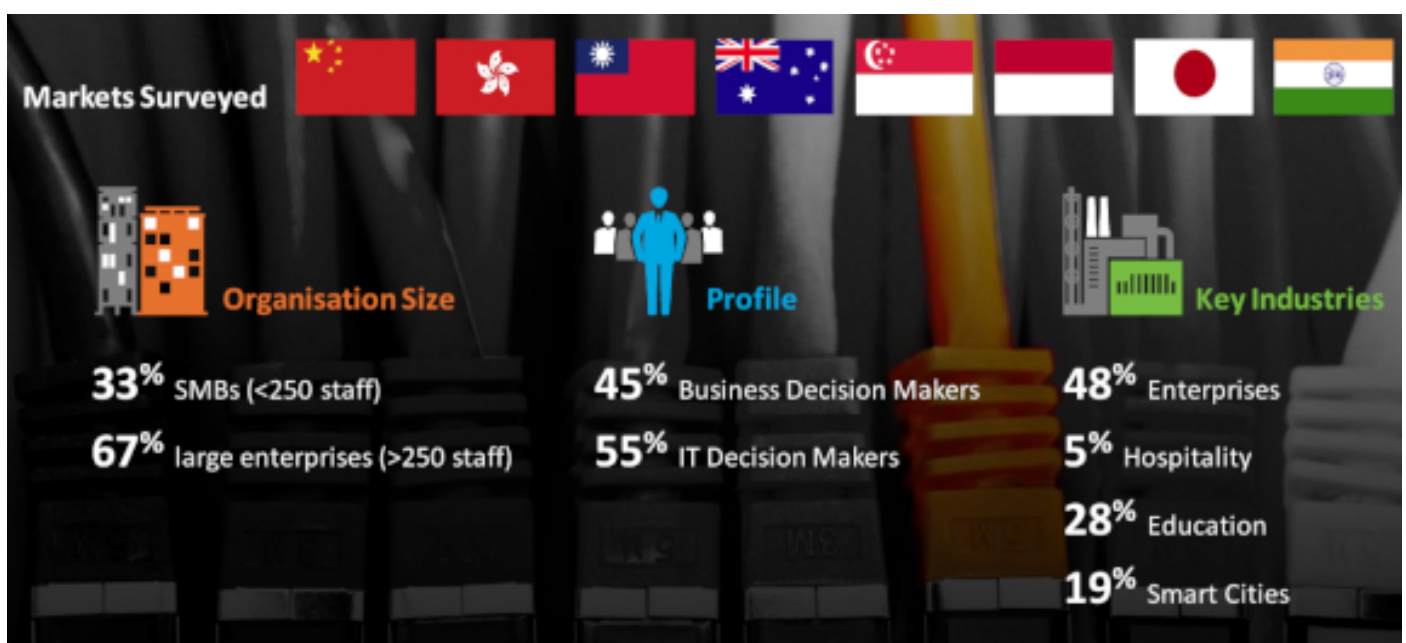
# LOSS OF WI-FI CONNECTIVITY HITTING AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSES

**A survey of 1200 business and IT leaders across Asia-Pacific claims that Australian businesses are losing \$4000 an hour on average due to loss of Wi-Fi connectivity.**

The survey was conducted by Ruckus Networks and covered China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, Japan, India, Singapore and Indonesia.

All survey respondents were from medium or large organisations with more than 250 employees, and are involved in decision-making and implementation of IT-related initiatives.

The breakout of how many people were interviewed from each country/region was not available.



Lack of connectivity was found to have affected the bottom line of business operations in APAC to the tune of AUD\$70.5 million (US\$51 million) over the past year.

Almost all (98%) of Australian businesses experienced at least one downtime incident per month, and 43% experienced between two and five such incidents.

Slightly more than half (57%) of Australian businesses had an average connectivity downtime of at least an hour.

Japan (64%), Singapore (57%) and Australia (56%) were the top three countries that required Wi-Fi connectivity for work purposes.

The survey also found that more than a third (35%) of Australian organisations needed to spend more than five days each month to manage Wi-Fi or network-related issues.



Almost all respondents (97%) were satisfied with the current state of Wi-Fi security in their organisations.

But 19% of APAC respondents indicated they had an open Wi-Fi network with no secure login measures.

In Australia, the figure was 20%.

When it came to connecting to unfamiliar Wi-Fi networks, business and IT leaders were more vigilant.

83% of APAC respondents indicated that insecure connections were one of the top three concerns they had when connecting to public Wi-Fi.

“Wi-Fi is the foundation of Australia’s burgeoning digital economy,” said Carl Jefferys, country manager, Australia & New Zealand, Ruckus Networks.

“Not only is it a productivity tool to empower employees to work and collaborate better, it is also a platform that enables organisations to interact directly with their customers.”

“Wi-Fi is often forgotten as the one instrumental element that breathes life to new digital initiatives and pushes growth opportunities in today’s dynamic and competitive digital era.

"For example, Wi-Fi infrastructure is also the basis for a range of other radio frequency technologies used in Internet of Things applications.

“Understanding that Wi-Fi is indeed the backbone of digital transformation efforts will mitigate significant disruption, and in turn, losses in revenue.”

**Sam Varghese**

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# COMMS ALLIANCE UNVEILS NEW FAMILY FRIENDLY FILTER PROGRAM

**Australian parents who wish to protect their families from unwanted or harmful Internet content now have "new options" under the reinvigorated Family Friendly Filter program operated by the industry lobby group Communications Alliance.**

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Three new filter vendors have now passed the rigorous independent testing needed to be certified as Family Friendly Filter providers.

The newly accredited filters are:

- [Norton Family Premier](#), from Symantec;
- [Family Zone](#); and
- [Australian Private Networks](#) (as part of their Internet service).

Australians can choose a certified filter provider by visiting [the Family Friendly Filter page](#) on the Communications Alliance [website](#).



Communications Alliance chief executive John Stanton said the availability of three certified providers was particularly welcome in an environment of increasing concern about the potentially harmful effects of children being exposed to

sexually explicit content online.

"We are working closely with the Office of the eSafety Commissioner on online safety issues, and the Family Friendly Filter program has an important role to play in offering safe options to parents," he said.

To qualify as a Family Friendly Filter provider, filter vendors must pass "stringent testing performed by respected independent testing house, Enex TestLab, which uses an undesirable content site list provided by the industry regulator, the ACMA".

"The testing criteria include effectiveness, ease of use, configurability, availability of support and agreement by the candidate filter company to update the filter as required by the Office of the eSafety Commissioner – for example, where the Office determines following a complaint that a specified site is prohibited under Australian law.

"The filters come in a number of levels of classification, enabling families to choose a level of filtering that is suitable to the age of children in the family.

"Filters are only one tool that can be used to encourage safe Internet access. The [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#) provides a range of information, tools and educational material for parents and schools. The Office also offers help with and accepts complaints regarding cyber bullying and offensive and illegal content.

"In addition, many Australian ISPs have tools and information available to parents concerned about online safety issues."

**Alex Zaharov-Reutt**

# ERICSSON AND T-MOBILE SIGN MAMMOTH US\$3.5B 5G AGREEMENT

**In a deal that bodes well for Ericsson now that Huawei is out of the Australian 5G picture, the Swedish telco equipment maker and US telco T-Mobile have announced a "multi-year, \$3.5 billion contract to support T-Mobile's nationwide 5G network deployment."**

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Under the deal, Ericsson said it "will provide T-Mobile with the latest 5G New Radio hardware and software compliant with 3GPP standards".

Bridging from a nationwide LTE Advanced network to 5G, T-Mobile "will leverage Ericsson's market-leading 5G portfolio to expand existing LTE capacity needs while future-proofing the network".

"The contract also encompasses Ericsson's digital services solutions, including dynamic orchestration, business support systems and Ericsson Cloud Core, enabling T-Mobile to rapidly launch innovative and groundbreaking 5G experiences to customers."

Neville Ray, chief technology officer, T-Mobile, said: "While the other guys just make promises, we're putting our money where our mouth is.

"With this new Ericsson agreement we're laying the groundwork for 5G – and with Sprint we can supercharge the 5G revolution."

Niklas Heuvelodp, president and hHead of Ericsson North America, said: "We have recently decided to increase our investments in the US to be closer to our leading customers and better support them with their accelerated 5G deployments; thereby bringing 5G to life for consumers and enterprises across the country.

"This agreement marks a major milestone for both companies. We are excited about our partnership with T-Mobile, supporting them to strengthen, expand and speed up the deployment of their nationwide 5G network."

As Ericsson reminds us, "5G promises to deliver very high data speeds, extreme low latency, ultra-high reliability, energy efficiency and extreme device densities, which will be realised by the development of LTE in combination with new radio-access technologies.

"Under the terms of the new deal, Ericsson will supply hardware and software from its market-ready 5G Platform, which includes its strengthened Ericsson Radio System portfolio, across all spectrum bands available to T-Mobile.

"Additionally, T-Mobile's already installed base of Ericsson Radio System radios will be able to run 5G NR technology with simple remote software installation."

**Alex Zaharov-Reutt**

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