

CommsWire

Essential daily reading for the communications industry executive

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ALL SYSTEMS GO AS FOUR GRAB 5G SPECTRUM



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TELSTRA HEADS FOUR COMPANIES IN BUYING 5G SPECTRUM

Telstra has picked up the largest number of lots in the 5G spectrum auction organised by the Australian Communication and Media Authority in the 3.6 GHz band.

Australia's biggest telco forked out a shade over \$386 million to acquire 143 lots.

All 350 lots available in the auction were sold for approximately \$853 million, equivalent to about \$0.29/MHz/pop.

Mobile JV, a joint venture between subsidiaries of TPG Telecom and Vodafone Hutchison Australia, picked up 131 lots for \$263 million.

Optus Mobile bought 47 lots for \$185 million while Dense Air Australia was the fourth company to buy up spectrum, paying \$18.5 million for 29 lots.

Frequencies assigned in the 3.6 GHz band spectrum auction

FREQUENCIES		METROPOLITAN AREAS						REGIONAL AREAS							
		ADEL	BRIS	CANB	MELB	SYDN	PERT	NQLD	CQLD	RNSQ	RSWN	RVIC	TASM	RESA	REWA
3575	3580														
3580	3585														
3585	3590														
3590	3595														
3595	3600														
3600	3605														
3605	3610														
3610	3615														
3615	3620														
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3665	3670														
3670	3675														
3675	3680														
3680	3685														
3685	3690														
3690	3695														
3695	3700														

KEY	
	DENSE AIR
	MOBILE JV
	OPTUS
	TELSTRA

KEY	
ADEL	Adelaide
BRIS	Brisbane
CANB	Canberra
MELB	Melbourne
SYDN	Sydney
PERT	Perth

KEY	
NQLD	North Queensland
CQLD	Central Queensland
RNSQ	Regional Northern NSW/Southern Queensland
RSWN	Regional Southern/Western NSW
RVIC	Regional Victoria
TASM	Tasmania
RESA	Regional South Australia
REWA	Regional Western Australia

Telstra chief executive Andrew Penn said in a statement: "...we have secured between 30-80 MHz nationwide in the 3.6 GHz spectrum auction. The 3.6 GHz spectrum is important as it is to be used globally for 5G.

"This investment of \$386 million will support our national 5G rollout, and adds to the momentum we are building to bring 5G services to Australians in both cities and regional areas in the new year.

"Combined with existing holdings, Telstra now has 60 MHz of contiguous 5G spectrum in all major capital cities and between 50-80 MHz of contiguous 5G spectrum in all regional areas."

Licences won at auction will commence in March 2020 and extend until 13 December 2030. But earlier access to the band could be enabled, provided that no interference is caused to existing licensees.

Optus Networks Managing Director Dennis Wong said, "The additional spectrum positions Optus strongly to deliver 5G services in cities, regions and holiday locations.

"We are committed to commercially launching Fixed Wireless Access services early in 2019 and we can now extend these services to regional Australia."

"Optus continues to invest in our network where it matters most to people, where they live, work and play. Whether you live in the cities, regional centres or smaller remote towns, we are expanding our premium national mobile network and improving customer experience."

Vodafone Hutchison Australia chief executive Iñaki Berroeta says the company's "significant spectrum investment", along with TPG Telecom, has delivered one of the key pieces in its 5G preparations.

Said Berroeta: "We have been preparing for the evolution to 5G for several years, and the acquisition of spectrum licences in metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional areas brings 5G another step closer to reality.

"The 60MHz holdings the JV has secured in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra give us a strong 5G spectrum capability in each of these major cities."

"This spectrum is recognised internationally as a key band for 5G services. Timely release of 5G-compatible spectrum will facilitate the early delivery of next generation 5G services to the Australian public and industry," ACMA chair Nerida O'Loughlin said in a statement.

"The ACMA designed an auction process — including starting prices — that aimed to maximise efficiency, competitive outcomes and the full utility of this spectrum for 5G. We consider these goals have been reflected in the auction outcome.

"Existing licensees have generally been provided an extended period in which they can continue to use this band. During this period, their rights are protected."

Sam Varghese and Peter Dinham

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NBN CO LOOKS TO BUSINESSES EARNINGS TO AVOID WRITE-DOWN

The NBN Co, the company rolling out Australia's national broadband network, plans to create new plans for businesses in order to earn \$1 billion in revenue from the sector.

The new plans will be 30% to 50% cheaper than those available and will include high speeds and data quotas, a statement from the company said on Monday.

The move is part of the company's efforts to raise its average revenue per user which \$44 when it [announced](#) its latest quarterly results, the same as that for its full-year 2018.



The new plans aim to raise one fifth of revenue from businesses, compared to about 15% at the moment.

The new wholesale discount bundles will be:

- Wholesale speeds of 50/20Mbps optimised for smaller businesses;
- Wholesale speeds of 100/40Mbps with support for multiple phone lines for medium-sized businesses;
- Wholesale symmetrical committed speeds of 20/20Mbps and a 100/40Mbps peak information rate; and
- Wholesale symmetrical committed speeds of 50/50Mbps and a 250/100Mbps peak information rate for data-intensive and multi-site organisations.

NBN Co had a Focus on 50 scheme, in operation during the year, which resulted in 53% of

homes and businesses taking plans with this speed.

NBN Co's chief customer officer for Business, Paul Tyler, said: "We've undertaken extensive research with Australian businesses and our service providers which reveals increased service assurance, high speeds and committed bandwidth are the most important factors for businesses connecting to the NBN access network.

"We recognise some businesses are on NBN powered plans that have not been optimised for their needs. Businesses should speak to their service provider about whether they require high-speeds for cloud applications, committed and symmetrical information rates for audio and video conferencing or increased service assurance for business-critical applications.

"NBN Co does not set retail prices. However our new wholesale discount bundles are designed to incentivise retailers to offer these business-grade services to improve customer experience on the network.

"We're committed to continually working with the industry to invest in our wholesale product and service suite such as our business-grade satellite service, which is due to launch in 2019 and designed to benefit regional and rural organisations."

NBN Co chief executive Stephen Rue [said](#) during the last results announcement: "Fifty-three percent of all homes and businesses are now on a 50 Mbps wholesale download speed or higher, with 70% of new customers opting for these higher speed plans each month.

"We know our pricing decisions last year are having the impact we intended, that is, to help provide a good experience for homes and businesses using the network."

The company has said it needs to achieve ARPU of \$52 in order to avoid a write-down.

In October, NBN Co chairman Ziggy Switkowski [told](#) a Senate panel that the company could fetch a price of \$50 billion once the rollout was completed by 2021.

He added that in his personal opinion a write-down of the network was not necessary.

The Coalition Government has ruled out a write-down of the network.

But Shadow Communications Minister Michelle Rowland [has said](#) the Labor Party is keeping open the option of writing down the value of the NBN if it won the next federal election, which is due by May 2019.

And in July, the ratings agency Standard & Poor's [said](#) the NBN would not return a profit from the billions invested in the project, adding that the NBN Co's business model had led to telcos investing heavily in mobile services to avoid paying the company's inflated prices.

Sam Varghese



John de Ridder

Telecommunications Economist

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SINGTEL INTEGRATES CYBER SECURITY BUSINESS UNDER TRUSTWAVE

Singapore telecommunications provider Singtel has grouped its cyber security business with Optus, Trustwave and NCS under a single banner that will operate as Trustwave.

The new entity will offer managed security services, consulting, education, and leading-edge technologies to combat internal and external threats, Singtel said in a statement.

With this integration, Trustwave's global business has about 2000 security employees and a global network of 10 connected advanced security operations centres supported by the Trustwave SpiderLabs security team.



It also has millions of businesses enrolled in its cloud-based security platform, more than 10,000 managed security services customers, and nearly 1000 channel partners and numerous technology partners worldwide.

“Uniting the security assets and deep expertise of Singtel, Optus, Trustwave and NCS under one brand and single vision – what we call the new Trustwave - is a pivotal milestone for our customers, partners, employees and company,” said Arthur Wong, chief

executive at Trustwave (pictured above).

“Trustwave is well-positioned to further its role as a recognised leader in cyber security and managed security services, areas vital for effective security programs as enterprises accelerate their digital transformation.

“Customers benefit by having a trusted security partner with true global reach and intelligence, offering around-the-clock monitoring, detection and eradication of threats in addition to deep regional security expertise necessary for successfully addressing global threats and localised attack campaigns.”

Sam Varghese

ACCC SUGGESTS BODY TO CURB EXCESSES OF GOOGLE, FACEBOOK

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has suggested that a regulatory entity to investigate and curb the influence of tech giants Google and Facebook be set up, as part of recommendations in a preliminary report from its inquiry into digital platforms.

The [378-page report](#), released on Monday, has hinted that the two companies, which earn about four-fifths of Australia's \$8 billion digital advertising, could be involved in discriminatory conduct, the ACCC said in a statement.

It called for submissions on the preliminary report by 15 February 2019.

The final report is scheduled to be released in June 2019.



The report contains 11 preliminary recommendations and eight areas for further analysis.

It said the watchdog had concluded that Google has substantial market power in online search, search advertising and news referral while Facebook had similar clout in markets for social media, display

advertising and online news referral.

Among the preliminary recommendations are those aiming to address Google and Facebook's market power and promote increased consumer choice.

These include a proposal that would prevent Google's browser Chrome being installed as the default on mobile devices, computers and tablets and Google's search engine being the default search engine on browsers.

The ACCC also proposed that a new or existing regulatory authority be given the task of investigating, monitoring and reporting on how large digital platforms rank and display advertisements and news content.

Other preliminary recommendations suggest ways to strengthen merger laws.

Additional preliminary recommendations deal with copyright, and take-down orders, and the review of existing, disparate media regulations.

Consumers would be better off if they could make informed and genuine choices as to how digital platforms collect and use their data, the ACCC said, proposing changes to the Privacy Act to enable consumers to make informed decisions.

Another recommendation being considered is for a specific code of practice for digital platforms' data collection to better inform consumers and improve their bargaining power.

"Digital platforms have significantly transformed our lives, the way we communicate with each other and access news and information. We appreciate that many of these changes have been positive for consumers in relation to the way they access news and information and how they interact with each other and with businesses," ACCC chair Rod Sims said.

"But digital platforms are also unavoidable business partners for many Australian businesses. Google and Facebook perform a critical role in enabling businesses, including online news media businesses, to reach consumers. However, the operation of these platforms' key algorithms determining the order in which content appears is not at all clear."

The preliminary report also questioned whether social media companies were willing to curb fraudulent advertising and also queried the use of algorithms to track what content is being viewed by users.

"News and journalism perform a critical role in society. The downturn in advertising revenue has led to a cut in the number of journalists over the past decade.

"This has implications across society because of the important role the media plays in exposing corruption and holding governments, companies, powerful individuals and institutions to account," Sims said.

"Organisations like Google and Facebook are more than mere distributors or pure intermediaries in the supply of news in Australia; they increasingly perform similar functions as media businesses like selecting, curating and ranking content. Yet, digital platforms face less regulation than many media businesses.

"The ACCC considers that the strong market position of digital platforms like Google and Facebook justifies a greater level of regulatory oversight.

"Australian law does not prohibit a business from possessing significant market power or using its efficiencies or skills to 'out compete' its rivals.

"But when their dominant position is at risk of creating competitive or consumer harm, governments should stay ahead of the game and act to protect consumers and businesses through regulation."

Sam Varghese

ENCRYPTION: BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR CRIMS SAYS SECURITY PRO

Terrorists and paedophiles, the two claimed targets of the Government's encryption laws, are likely to bury themselves deeper on the dark net and adopt necessary security precautions to keep operating as before, a senior security professional has warned.

Bogdan Botezatu, a senior e-threat analyst at security firm Bitdefender, said on the other hand, the losers would be innocent people who would forfeit their privacy and freedom of speech for nothing.

The encryption laws [took effect](#) on Thursday evening after the Senate approved them without any amendments.

Botezatu said many countries were pursuing similar laws that would make it mandatory for secure communications service providers to intercept and document messages. These were aimed at circumventing the progress made in recent years to secure communications, in order that law enforcement agencies could extract the contents of conversations.

"However, in the current form, it seems that regulators are not necessarily looking into weakening encryption or removing it, but rather into forcing service providers to offer full co-operation for covert backdooring," he said.

"Because it is not specified who these 'providers' are or how 'access' will be possible - other than what is summarised in point 2: Introducing new computer access warrants for law enforcement that will enable them to covertly obtain evidence directly from a device - scenarios such as internet service providers transparently planting government-sanctioned spyware on users' devices will become a reality.

"Additionally, application providers who service customers in Australia will be forced to install, maintain, test, or use software that a law-enforcement or intelligence agency has given them."

Botezatu said it was difficult to say what opportunities such backdoors would provide for law enforcement, but it was easy to predict the outcome for the common man.

"Weakening security in any way might help cyber criminals capitalise on technical oversights or user confusion to carry out their own agenda," he said.

"In addition, extremely sophisticated backdoor code likely included with, or installed through, applications or ISPs, will inspire cyber criminals who will include these threat vectors into their existing creations.

"Last, but not least, getting citizens used to cyber surveillance for a good cause can generate chilling effects or a relaxed attitude towards weak security by design."

Sam Varghese

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