

CommsWire

Essential daily reading for the communications industry executive

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Editor: Stan Beer

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TELSTRA GOES ALL OUT TO LURE SMALL BUSINESS



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CommsWire/Telecommunications Editor: Stan Beer

Staff writers: Peter Dinham, Alex Zaharov-Reutt, Sam Varghese. Columnist: John de Ridder

Advertising: CEO and Editor in Chief, Andrew Matler: andrew.matler@itwire.com • Tel: 0412 390 000

TELSTRA LAUNCHES REVAMP OF SERVICES FOR SMALL BUSINESS

Telstra has unveiled a major revamp of its support for Australian small businesses, in an effort to win back the lucrative sector, including a new mobile and tablet plan with no lock-in contract and no excess data charges in Australia.

Australia's largest telco announced on Wednesday that it had also launched a new 24/7 tech support service and thousands more dedicated small business specialists across the country.



Telstra positions these latest announcements as the next stage in the rollout of its T22 strategy.

The company says T22 has already delivered simpler products by removing domestic excess data charges on consumer mobile plans and provided more choice for customers creating a home or mobile package.

The revamp was announced at an Illawarra Business Chamber Forum in Wollongong on Wednesday by Telstra chief executive Andrew Penn.

The Telstra boss said the T22 milestone for small business was “perfectly timed as many more businesses look to technology to drive productivity, access new markets and improve customer experience”.

“Our new approach for small business is built around three things — flexibility to enable businesses to scale and choose what is right for them, greater cost certainty and value, and expert service and advice — all critical elements for success in today’s fast-paced business environment.

“We know every small business is different – our job is to make sure we have leading solutions and services that are fit for purpose and what we’ve announced today does that.”

Telstra’s new suite of solutions and services for small business includes:

- Business Choice mobile plan – small business customers can now get a new mobile or tablet plan with no lock-in contract and no excess data charges in Australia.
- Unlimited data – as standard on Business Bundle plans starting from \$100.
- Telstra Platinum for Business – a new 24/7 tech advice and support service for business owners to take the pressure off having to employ, or in most cases, be their own IT experts.
- More dedicated service and support for small businesses – Telstra has tripled the number of small business specialists in its 350 retail stores around the country to 3,000.
- In early 2019, Telstra will launch a new national premium ICT channel for small business customers with more complex technology needs.
- Telstra has also introduced a Concierge Tech Support service that provides small business customers calling with an NBN or fixed line service issue with one dedicated expert to help solve their problem fast.

Penn said the new solutions were about ensuring Telstra was not only providing advanced technology solutions to small businesses, but also the essential support to go with it.

“This is a significant increase to the level of dedicated service and support we provide small businesses, to help take away complexity and give them peace of mind with their technology usage and support,” he said.

Telstra confirmed the next key milestone under its T22 strategy would be the introduction of a new “market leading” loyalty program in March 2019.

Peter Dinham

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CA REJECTS CALLS TO PROVIDE GOVT WITH FREE EMERGENCY ALERTS

Telecommunications industry lobby group Communications Alliance has vehemently rejected calls from the Queensland Government for mobile carriers to provide community phone emergency alerts without monetary compensation.

While rejecting the call, Communications Alliance chief executive John Stanton said, however, that mobile carriers were very conscious about their responsibilities during an emergency .

Stanton said, "They spend a lot of resources to provide government and the community with a range of vital and complex technologies that facilitate various emergency-related features, including emergency alerts."

"These technologies are far from simple and are subject to commercial arrangements between government and the mobile carriers.

"Upon government's request, mobile carriers have put in place the sophisticated technology to be able to prioritise and deliver alerts across mobile and fixed networks with millions of messages sent across Australia each year.

"At its inception in 2009, Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments decided that those services would be provided on a national basis with fees charged to government, but no direct fees payable by the recipients of emergency alerts.

"In line with those agreements, mobile operators ought to be compensated for the services they provide."

Stanton said mobile operators had a strong track record of assisting victims of natural disasters in a number of ways, including through giving free handsets to those whose devices have been destroyed and providing assistance with the costs of staying connected.

And he said mobile operators were also using special "cells on wheels" in areas where mobile infrastructure had been destroyed, to boost connectivity during such critical times.

"Our industry will continue to ensure that Australians benefit from state-of-the-art emergency systems.

"For example, work is underway to further improve location accuracy for emergency calls to allow emergency crews to have access to more detailed information about where a person in need may be located.

"And, of course, mobile carriers continue to provide emergency calls without compensation and free-of-charge to the caller," he said.

Peter Dinham



John de Ridder

Telecommunications Economist

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BROADCAST AUSTRALIA COMPLETES TESLA POWERWALL INSTALLATION

Broadcast transmission company Broadcast Australia has completed the installation of a Tesla Powerwall in Corryong, Victoria, which will provide critical back-up power to support the ABC local radio service.

Broadcast Australia, a BAI Communications company, says the installation of the Tesla Powerwall provides a more reliable solution for local radio services in the region.

The project was initiated and supported by the Corryong Fire Brigade to secure a solution that would provide a back-up capacity of up to 27 hours.



Broadcast Australia and the ABC worked together with the Corryong community to identify the benefits back-up power could bring to improve service reliability.

Broadcast Australia says the innovative application of Tesla Powerwall would help ensure that the ABC local radio service in Corryong had enough stored energy to operate in times of

emergency when the network supply has failed.

“This is crucial during emergencies like blackouts, flood or fires to ensure the Corryong and Upper Murray community remain informed and up-to-date with local news and emergency broadcast information,” Broadcast Australia said.

“To date, we haven’t had a back-up power solution which historically meant that during inevitable mains power outages, people weren’t able to get the ABC local radio,” said Warwick Ross of Corryong Fire Brigade.

“Thanks to the efforts within our community as well as the technology and support of Broadcast Australia, this Tesla Powerwall will ensure failures won’t leave Corryong’s residents uninformed.

“Local radio services are so important to communities like Corryong, especially in times of emergency. However, times of emergency often also coincide with power outages, making it difficult to keep the services running consistently. When we heard about the challenge that Corryong was facing, we saw it as a great opportunity to apply the 13.5kWh Tesla Powerwall to improve the site’s back-up capacity and strengthen the community’s radio infrastructure.”

Broadcast Australia says it has already successfully tested Tesla Powerwall technology at its Hopetoun site in Victoria to assess its suitability to be applied elsewhere.

Peter Dinham

ASD CHIEF HITS OUT AT 'MYTHS' SURROUNDING ENCRYPTION LAW

Myths have been spread about the Federal Government's newly passed encryption law, according to the director-general of the Australian Signals Directorate, Mike Burgess, who claims that there has been "considerable inaccurate commentary" and "misconceptions".

In [a statement](#) on what he calls the TOLA Act — a neat acronym for the Telecommunications and Other Legislation Amendment (Assistance and Access) Act 2018 — Burgess said firstly it was incorrect to claim that information was no longer safe as those using messaging apps for lawful purposes would not come within the purview of the law.



The laws took effect on 6 December after the Labor Party [agreed to pass them](#) without any amendments due to the fact that the House of Representatives had risen for the year.

Labor leader Bill Shorten says he has secured a pledge that 50 pages of amendments will be passed in the new year, though the government says it has only agreed to consider them.

Burgess (pictured above) said it was also untrue to claim that the new laws had given spy agencies unfettered powers, claiming that there were significant checks and balances.

"Agencies can get a warrant to listen to the phone calls of criminals.

"Why shouldn't these same agencies be able to get assistance to read the encrypted messages of criminals when Australian lives and livelihoods are at stake?" he asked.

Burgess also said it a myth to say that Internet security was under threat as the investigations which would be launched under the law would be "highly targeted".

"Agencies cannot use the legislation to ask or require companies to create systemic weaknesses which would jeopardise the communications of other users," he added.

He denied that the law would force technology companies to move their production offshore, [a claim that was made](#) by the chairman of encryption technology firm Senetas, Francis Galbally, during a Senate panel hearing.

But Burgess did not offer any evidence to support this statement, apart from saying: "Australia is not the first country to enact this sort of legislation – and we will not be the last.

“Agencies in the UK already have similar powers and other nations are considering their options.

“The claims the legislation will drive tech companies offshore are similarly flawed.”

He said it was a myth to say there was no way of ensuring that Australian communications would not be jeopardised .

This was because the law had built-in oversight mechanisms, "including oversight from the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security and the Commonwealth Ombudsman".

Further, the notices that sought or compelled industry assistance to add functionality were also subject to review, through not from sitting judges.

Burgess said another myth being spread was that the ASD would now be able to spy on Australians, pointing out that the agency was focused on foreign intelligence.

He also said the claim that Australian technology companies would suffer in terms of reputation was wrong.

Those who have compared the outcome of the ban that Australia has imposed on Chinese telecommunications firm Huawei to what would happen to local tech firms were incorrect.

This was because, "It is not in any way an equivalent comparison to the highly-targeted assistance that the Australian Government will be seeking under the TOLA Act".

Burgess said many claims about the law were "hyperbolic, inaccurate and influenced by self-interest, rather than the national interest".

"The true danger is the thing the TOLA Act seeks to prevent: terrorists, paedophiles and other criminals communicating in secret, without law enforcement and security agencies being able to ‘crack their code’," he claimed.

"Australia’s law enforcement and national security agencies do not ask for legislative change lightly or routinely.

“But when technology evolves, the law should evolve too – so we can continue our mission to keep Australians safe.”

Sam Varghese

REGULATION OF TRANSMISSION SERVICES TO CONTINUE FOR 5 YEARS

Regulation of Australia's transmission services will continue for a further five years, with the ACCC finding that the regulation has promoted competition and efficient investment, and has contributed to lower prices and greater choice in phone and data services.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has released a draft report proposing that its declaration of Australia's Domestic Transmission Capacity Service continue for a further five years after the current arrangement expires on 31 March 2019.

Transmission services, also known as backhaul, are high-capacity wholesale services that carry large volumes of voice, data and video traffic, often over long distances.

The ACCC regulates transmission services in areas where there is a lack of competition between providers, so that phone and data services can be delivered to consumers at affordable prices.

The draft report forms part of a public inquiry under the Competition and Consumer Act 2010, examining whether regulation of the DTCS should be extended.

"Regulating the DTCS helps ensure access to backhaul where competition is limited, which can be particularly the case in outer metropolitan and regional areas," ACCC commissioner Cristina Cifuentes said.

"This regulation has promoted competition and efficient investment, as well as contributed to lower prices and greater choice for Australian consumers.

"Extending our declaration for a further five years will allow time for the rollout of the National Broadband Network to be completed. The NBN is likely to both complement and compete with existing DTCS services."

The ACCC's draft report also proposes to end regulation of 137 metropolitan and 27 regional exchange service areas, where the ACCC is satisfied there is now effective competition due to new investment in transmission infrastructure.

And the Commission is also proposing to update the DTCS service description, which sets out which types of transmission services can be classified and regulated.

The draft report proposes separate service categories for mobile backhaul transmission and common bandwidth capacities.

The ACCC will make its final decision by 31 March 2019, and stakeholders' comments are sought by 1 February 2019.

To access information on the DTCS and the ACCC'S draft report [click here](#).

Peter Dinham

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