

CommsWire

Essential daily reading for the communications industry executive

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VHA HINTS AT GOVT MONEY FOR HUAWEI BAN



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VHA'S BERROETA HINTS AT COMPENSATION FOR HUAWEI BAN

COMMENT: Vodafone Hutchison Australia chief executive Iñaki Berroeta certainly does not lack chutzpah. He is now floating the idea that VHA should be paid compensation because the company cannot use Huawei gear in its 5G network rollout.

Wrap your head around this, gentle reader. Berroeta thinks that the Australian Government ban on Huawei equipment gives Telstra and Optus a competitive advantage – and so he wants money from the public purse to compensate his company for that.

Lest there be any doubt, he wants this money, your taxes and mine, to bolster the balance sheet of a publicly-listed company. A commercial firm. Not a charity. Not a non-profit. Let there be no mistake in what he asking for.

Berroeta reminds me of the heads of the three American automotive firms who flew to Washington DC soon after the global financial crisis struck — each on his own corporate jet, mind you — to ask Congress for bailout money.

These three worthies had sufficient cash to fly in on their own jets. They did not even give a moment's thought to flying in on a single aircraft, let alone on a commercial flight.

And still they had no shame to come to Congress and beg for money.

This was the ultimate expression of chutzpah, and perhaps Berroeta still has some way to go before he can match that trio.

But he is still asking the public to pay for the company's decision to use Huawei equipment in its 4G LTE network.

Has Vodafone ever offered to pay the government extra taxes in years when it had good earnings? What has it done to even contemplate the idea that public money should be donated its way?

Did Vodafone take any poll among Australians before it made its technology choices? Are the masses to blame for corporate decisions?

Corporates are very good at taking public money under this guise or that. They talk themselves hoarse about the free market when they ruthlessly cut staff, but when it comes to situations like that which Vodafone finds itself in, they have no shame in begging for public aid.

If Berroeta cannot manage to run the company without public money, let it fold. Australia already has too many telcos for a small population. Nobody will weep if Vodafone leaves this land.

But we will be free of at least one captain of industry who is looking for some excuse to dip into the public purse.

Sam Varghese



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BEAM FORMALISES DEAL TO SELL SATELLITE PHONES IN INDIA

Australian ASX-listed mobile satellite technology firm Beam Communications has signed deal with Indian satellite solutions company Station Satcom to resell Beam-branded Inmarsat equipment in the country.

Station Satcom has already sold about US\$250,000 worth of Beam equipment since January, and Wednesday's announcement was a formalisation of the partnership, a statement said.



Oceana 800 Fixed-Satellite Phone

The Indian Government approved the sale and use of satellite devices on the Inmarsat satellite network, the only global satellite service allowed to operate in the country, last year.

Beam's docking stations are the only Inmarsat-approved docking units in the world and the Oceana 800 fixed-satellite phone is the lone device of its kind running on the Inmarsat GPS Service.

Station Satcom chief executive Anshul Khanna said: "We are excited to have signed a reseller agreement with Beam after seeing such strong initial demand for its products in India.

"We are expecting further robust sales of Beam's Inmarsat equipment as this is the first time we've been able to sell such equipment in the Indian market, and as the Inmarsat service gains greater market penetration.

"Station Satcom has chosen to partner with Beam for its strong brand recognition in the industry and its long track record in developing and manufacturing reliable and high-quality satellite devices for global satellite network operators."

Beam's equipment division recorded a 30% rise in sale in the first-half of FY2019 and the company said it was hopeful that the Indian deal would make a strong contribution to ongoing growth.

Inmarsat launched its Indian GPS Gateway in 2017, enabling government and private sector customers to access its satellite phone services via Inmarsat's fourth-generation constellation.

The gateway will enable the Indian Government to provide secure communications to defence services, commercial enterprises, the maritime industry and India's remote communities.

Sam Varghese



John de Ridder

Telecommunications Economist

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SPARK STILL UNDECIDED ON FRESH PROPOSAL TO USE HUAWEI GEAR

New Zealand telecommunications company Spark has still not decided whether to submit a revised proposal to the country's spy agency in order to see whether it can use equipment from Chinese vendor Huawei in its 5G network.

Spark Corporate Relations lead Andrew Pirie told *CommsWire* that the company was still working through what possible mitigations it might be able to provide to address the concerns raised by the General Communications Security Bureau, NZ's main spy agency.

In November, the GSCB said it had refused Spark permission to use Huawei equipment in its 5G network. This came after the two companies had demonstrated the technical implementation of access and core separation for 5G.

But subsequently, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has said on two separate occasions that this did not indicate a total ban on Huawei. She initially [told](#) a regular weekly news conference in February that Wellington would carry out its own risk-assessment to make a final decision on whether to use Huawei equipment or not.

That stance was [reiterated](#) by Ardern during a one-day visit to China this month, when she denied that her country had followed [Australia](#) in banning Huawei from participating in the 5G rollout.

For nearly two years, the US has been pushing countries it considers allies to avoid using equipment from Chinese companies, Huawei foremost, in 5G networks.

On Monday, the technical director of the UK National Cyber Security Centre, Dr Ian Levy, [slammed](#) Huawei for its engineering practices, which he characterised as "very, very shoddy".

Pirie told *CommsWire* that under the relevant New Zealand laws, Spark had the opportunity to submit a revised proposal to the GSCB if it thought it could mitigate the security concerns that had been raised.

Those concerns have not been made public, with GCSB director-general Andrew Hampton [saying](#) in November last year that Spark's proposal would raise significant national security risks. No details were provided as to the nature of the risk.

"Hence it is technically true that the use of Huawei 5G equipment has not been completely ruled out at this point," Pirie said. "But as things stand right now, we cannot use Huawei."

He added that Spark was aware of the various reports and comments coming out of the UK, "but we have no comment to make on them".

Contacted for comment, a Huawei spokesperson said: "Huawei continues to support Spark as it works through the process with the government."

Sam Varghese

TELSTRA WORKERS WALK OFF JOBS FOR SECOND STRIKE IN A MONTH

Telstra workers across Australia walked off the job on today following what they claim is the company's continued refusal to provide them with fair pay and conditions.

The main impact of the strike will be on maintenance, including diagnostics, testing, new service provisioning including NBN connections, fault repairs and investigations.



Communications, Electrical and Plumbing Union Communications Division national president Shane Murphy said the workers had been forced to take protected industrial action for the second time in the last two months as Telstra had refused to negotiate a fair enterprise deal.

The [first strike](#) took place in March.

“It’s unfortunate we’ve got to this point, but Telstra has left us with no other option,” Murphy said in a statement.

“We’ve been forced to take protected industrial action because Telstra is trying to force workers to take a pay cut in real terms.”

Last June, Telstra [announced](#) it would effect a net reduction of 8000 employees and contractors by 2022 and reduce two to four layers of management, leading to the cutting of one in four executive and middle management roles.

This would mean cutting 9500 jobs in all, as 1500 new positions are being created.

Said Murphy: “Workers have spent many months trying to get Telstra to come to the table with a fair wage offer to no avail.

“Instead of paying their workforce fairly and giving Australians the quality service we deserve, Telstra management seem intent on axing jobs, slashing wages and driving down services.

“Telstra management is running our once iconic telco into the ground.

“Telstra chief executive Andy Penn, whilst taking home millions, is overseeing the axing of thousands of jobs and attempting to force the remaining workforce to accept a pay increase well below inflation – effectively a pay cut.

“Telstra workers are committed to providing Australians with the best possible service, but they’re being hamstrung by management preoccupied with giving themselves bonuses, axing jobs and driving down workers’ pay and conditions.

“Workers don’t want to be in this position.

“Telstra management can easily put an end to this by simply putting forward a fair and reasonable offer that enables members and their families to keep pace with the cost of living.”

Contacted for comment, a Telstra spokesperson told **CommsWire**: "We have been given notice that members of the CEPU, one of Telstra's three unions, may strike today.

“This is one of a number of actions they have sought to take.

"While it is disappointing that the CEPU has decided to encourage this action in what is a challenging time for our business, we respect the legal right of the union and its membership to do so."

The spokesperson said only CEPU members, who made up about 10% of the total employee base, were involved and it was up to them to decide if they wanted to participate or not.

"With the last similar action, only around 2% of employees participated and there was no impact customer services," the spokesperson added.

"The stoppage does not apply where there is a threat to the life or the personal safety or health of persons (e.g. Triple Zero, medical assist).

"We have plans in place to ensure we avoid disruption for our customers and the vast majority of our people who are not participating in any action.

“We remain committed to constructive discussions with our people and unions to reach a new agreement.”

Sam Varghese

ACMA RELEASES COMPLIANCE PRIORITIES FOR TELECOMS INDUSTRY

The Australian Communications and Media Authority, has released its compliance priorities for 2019-20 for the telecoms and communications industries, including telecommunications consumer safeguards.

The ACMA says its authority-wide strategic approach to setting annual compliance priorities helps to streamline its work and provides “greater transparency and clarity for industry”, as well as guiding efforts to deliver effective compliance and, where necessary, targeted enforcement action.



The compliance approach to setting annual priorities replaces ACMA’s previous practice of setting priority compliance areas for some of its activities.

“Our compliance priorities focus on areas of significant public interest or concern and conduct that negatively impacts consumers,” the ACMA says in a statement.

The ACMA’s 2019–20 [compliance priorities](#) focus on six areas:

- Telecommunications consumer safeguards
- Small cells for 4G/5G and base station compliance
- Unsolicited communications
- Broadcast news
- Gambling
- Solar invertors interference and unlicensed activity in the 5.6 GHz and 400 MHz bands.

Just last week, the ACMA released this year’s draft five-year [spectrum outlook](#), with an overview of its spectrum management priorities and plans through to 2023.

Peter Dinham

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