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MTM NBN THE RIGHT CHOICE SAYS FLETCHER



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COMMS MINISTER FLETCHER SAYS MTM RIGHT MODEL FOR NBN

The LNP Government made the right choice in 2013 to adopt a multi-technology mix for rolling out the NBN, ditching a Labor plan to have fibre to 93% of homes and service the rest through fixed wireless and satellite, Communications Minister Paul Fletcher says.

Fletcher told ABC Radio Sydney on Wednesday afternoon that the priorities in building a broadband network were to get it built as soon as possible, have the highest available speeds and to do it as cost-effectively as possible.

Responding to a query as to whether he thought the country had the broadband it needed now and for the future, Fletcher told interviewer James Valentine: "So the strategy that we've adopted with a multi-technology mix has been, in my judgment, the right way to do that.

"More importantly, in the judgment of the NBN board and management team and my predecessor ministers Malcolm Turnbull and Mitch Fifield and we worked through this very carefully when we came into government in 2013 and we stayed on a consistent path since then to get the network delivered.

"We now have over 60% of people on the network taking 50Mbps or more. So we're seeing a steady increase in the speeds that people are taking and we're coming close to the point of having the network rollout completed, meaning that we have ubiquitous broadband and for 90% of people in the fixed line footprint, that means 50Mbps or more. So, of course there's always more that we can do but this is a very significant achievement."

Valentine pointed Fletcher to remarks made by RMIT professor Mark Gregory in an earlier interview in which he said: "...the government's come to the realisation, and be big enough to admit that they've made a mistake. Now, that in itself is going to be difficult for any politician to do.

"But in Australia's national interest, they need to do this. The next thing they need to do is they need to free up the management team of NBN Co to do what they need to do to take that business forward, and that would mean that they need to provide them with the flexibility to reorganise and to start upgrading to fibre, and to improve connectivity across the fixed wireless."

Asked whether, as per the comments, Australia was not getting the NBN it needed for 2020, Fletcher responded: "Well, just in the last year, the number of premises able to connect has increased by 2.8 million. There are now almost 10 million premises around the country able to connect and we're on track to complete the network rollout next year.

"Now, when we came to government, we adopted the multi-technology mix – a mix of fibre to the premises, fibre to the node, fibre to curbs, HFC and so on. We did that because it meant the rollout could be completed for \$30 billion less and five to eight years more quickly than the original plan.

"Back in 2013, barely 50,000 premises were connected. So, if you've got a plan to deliver a whole lot of broadband but most people aren't getting it, it's not really having an impact. We're now at the point where 5.5 million premises are connected and the average amount of data that people on the NBN are downloading each month is 240GB. Back in 2010, that number across the fixed network was 11GB. So we are all changing our behaviour as a result of improved broadband connectivity."

Fletcher reiterated comments he had made on Wednesday morning to one of the Nine newspapers, saying that Telstra could not bid for the NBN in the event that it was put up for sale because it was forbidden by doing so by law.

"That's been the law since 2009 or '10 or '11," he said. "In other words, as part of setting up NBN there was a legal requirement imposed that NBN could not be owned by a business that also provides retail telecommunication services.

"It was set up to be wholesale only and the reason for that is to maximise competition so that retailers — Optus, Telstra, Vocus, TPG, a whole range of others — are able to then go and use that network to deliver services to customers, make their own choices about what prices they offer, terms of service, and so on."

Valentine pointed out that Gregory had also said that the management of NBN Co needed to be given a free hand to "do what they want to do, do what they might need to do, in order to increase the delivery, increase the speed, increase the value of the NBN network."

To this Fletcher responded, "Look, it's very important that NBN Co board and management get on and do their job and that is what they're doing. For example, I talked about the fact that over 60% of customers are now taking 50Mbps or more. That reflects some major changes that NBN Co board and management made a couple of years ago which are working their way through the offerings that are available and how customers have responded to that.

"Indeed right now, NBN management has a consultation paper out with its customers — the retail service providers — proposing further options to change the pricing structure. So they're very much focused on how do we get the network rolled out as quickly as possible and how do we get people using it and using it at higher speeds."

Fletcher said as the network rollout continued, and more and more premises were connected, the speeds would get higher.

"Ultimately, what we want to make sure is that we, having invested \$51 billion of taxpayers' money in this network — that's the amount of equity and debt that the Commonwealth has put into NBN Co — it's very important that this asset is being used to achieve the social and economic objectives it's designed to achieve."

Sam Varghese

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NZ REGULATOR CLEARS INFRATIL FOR VODAFONE ACQUISITION

New Zealand's competition regulator, The Commerce Commission has given the greenlight for the Infratil investment consortium to acquire up to 50% of Vodafone NZ.

The Commission announced clearance on Thursday for the share buy after on lengthy consideration of the effects of the proposed acquisition on market competition, due to Infratil's 51% share in telecommunications services company Trustpower.

Infratil had submitted that Vodafone and Trustpower would continue to operate as independent companies.

In its statement today the Commission said it accepts this is likely, and "its analysis of the proposed acquisition was based on the conservative assumption that the businesses of Trustpower and Vodafone could be combined".

In reaching its decision, the Commission said it focused on the possible impact of the proposed acquisition in the national markets for the retail supply of broadband and mobile services.

Chair Anna Rawlings said the Commission was satisfied Infratil's proposed shareholding in both Vodafone and Trustpower would not substantially lessen competition in any of the markets it assessed.

"While Trustpower has in the past been an aggressive competitor in residential broadband, with a particular focus on energy and broadband bundles, several other multi-utility providers have similarly emerged including Vocus, Nova Energy and Contact Energy. 2Degrees and Stuff are also competing effectively in the residential broadband market alongside Spark and MyRepublic," Rawlings said.

"As it stands, Vodafone and Trustpower are not each other's closest competitors and even in regions where they would hold high market shares, such as Bay of Plenty and Wellington, they will continue to face effective competition from several other national operators.

"Consistent with the mobile market study preliminary findings, we consider competition in mobile markets is generally driven by the three network operators and is therefore unlikely to be affected by Infratil's acquisition.

"For these reasons, we are satisfied that the proposed transaction should be granted clearance."

Peter Dinham



John de Ridder

Telecommunications Economist

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NEW FINSPY MALWARE SPIES ON SIGNAL, TELEGRAM AND THREEMA

New versions of the surveillance tool FinSpy have been found, the Russian security outfit Kaspersky says, adding that attackers can use the software to spy on the activities of mobile devices and exfiltrate GPS location data, messages, photographs and call details.

The company [said](#) the new versions worked on both iOS and Android devices, could monitor activity on most popular messaging services, including those that encrypt data, and hide their presence much better than before.

The one factor that is not in favour of the attackers is the fact that one either needs physical access to a device in order to infect it. In the case of a jailbroken or rooted device, infection can be done through SMS, email or push notifications.

FinSpy, which is also known as FinFisher, is spyware developed by the UK company Gamma Group International and marketed by Lench IT Solutions through law enforcement channels.

The spyware monitors geolocation, all messages, contacts, media files, and data from WhatsApp, Facebook messenger or Viber, and sends all data to its handler using SMS or the HTTP protocol.

The new versions have added surveillance of messaging apps like Telegram, Signal and Threema. Additionally, FinSpy can now hide all sign of a jailbreak on an iOS device and also gain root on an Android device quite easily.

Back in September 2017, Nick FitzGerald, senior research fellow for Slovakian security firm ESET in the Asia-Pacific, [told iTWire](#) that a variant of FinSpy was being spread in seven countries through applications like WhatsApp, Skype, Avast, WinRAR and VLC Player.

This variant was said to be spreading through a man-in-the-middle method, with the disturbing factor being that the middle entity appeared to be an ISP in two of the countries.

The existence of FinSpy was [revealed](#) by WikiLeaks in 2014.

“The developers behind FinSpy constantly monitor security updates for mobile platforms and tend to quickly change their malicious programs to avoid their operation being blocked by fixes,” said Alexey Firsh, security researcher at Kaspersky.

“Moreover, they follow trends and implement functionality to exfiltrate data from applications that are currently popular.

“We observe victims of the FinSpy implants on a daily basis, so it’s worth keeping an eye on the latest platform updates and install them as soon as they are released. Regardless of how secure the apps you use might be, and how protected your data, once the phone is rooted or jailbroken, it is wide open to spying.”

Sam Varghese

COMPLAINTS SHOW NEED FOR RELIABILITY SAFEGUARDS: ACCAN

Unreliable telecommunications services are resulting in hundreds of thousands of complaints, the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network says, calling for greater reliability safeguards to reduce this number.

A [report](#) released by the Australian Communications and Media Authority on Wednesday showed that 448,470 complaints were filed by consumers in the final quarter of 2018.

The ACCAN said in a statement that taking into account the number of telecommunications services in the country, this came to 108 complaints per 10,000 services.

That was a 10.2% increase over the previous quarter.



The organisation, which styles itself as the consumer voice for Australian phone and internet users, said it was disappointed to note that telecommunications service faults were among the highest cause of complaints.

“The collection and release of this data by the ACMA is a big step forward in addressing telco accountability,” said ACCAN chief executive Teresa Corbin.

“The ACMA’s work will provide an important additional insight into the issues facing telecommunications consumers.”

The ACCAN also pointed out that the released data showed that telecommunications providers took a median time of six days to fix issues.

“When people buy a product or service, they rightly expect it to work as promised,” said

Corbin (pictured below).

"It's simply unacceptable for the millions of Australians who are connected to essential communications services to be left waiting for days on end without the service they have paid for. Consumers should have a right to reliability."



The ACCAN said it had, in the past, highlighted the need for consumer protections that ensured reliability to be extended to fixed-line broadband services from all retail service providers.

The organisation said it had also proposed, in response to Part B of the Consumer Safeguards Review, that connection and repair times for fixed-line services should be the same as the Customer Service Guarantee and be defined in days, not working days.

It expressed particular concern over the high number of complaints for NBN voice-only services, as this was an important services for older people and those in rural and remote areas.

"NBN voice-only customers had the greatest ratio of complaints per services in operation, according to the ACMA's data," said Corbin.

"We know that some Australians are still solely reliant on their home phones, so faults with these services would leave them vulnerable and unable to communicate."

The ACCAN said more transparency from telcos who had been named in the ACMA report, along with the data on complaints against them.

"While we're pleased to see more complaints data made public, consumers deserve the right to make informed decisions about their telco provider," said Corbin.

"By naming the telcos in this data, it would allow consumers to consider telcos' complaint-handling records when shopping around for a phone or Internet provider."

The ACCAN pointed out that this approach had been [recommended](#) by the government in its response to Consumer Safeguards Part A: Complaints handling and consumer redress, but had not yet been implemented.

Sam Varghese

OPPO RENO Z PROMISES 'LUXURY FOR LESS' WITH NEW A\$499 MODEL

At \$499, you miss out on wireless charging, an IP water resistance rating, the fastest Qualcomm processors, optical zooms and more, but Oppo is still seeking to offer what it says are "unbeatable features at an affordable price"

Oppo has announced it has launched its newest addition to its Reno Series, [the Reno Z](#), which "offers Aussies luxury for less, offering a number of innovative features they know and love from the Reno Series".



We're told "the new device elevates photography and mobile entertainment capabilities, exceeding expectations of smartphones in its price bracket".

So, what standout features do you get for the money?

Well, when premium flagships sell for \$1500 and go through to \$2500 and beyond, you have to choose your standout features carefully, and it looks like Oppo has done us that.

Oppo proudly boasts its Reno Z offers "innovative features including a 48MP rear camera, an immersive 6.4-inch AMOLED screen with a screen-to-body ratio of 92%, the new and improved Ultra Night Mode 2.0 for captivating nighttime photography, and VOOC 3.0 to dramatically increase the speed of the last trickle charge".

The screen has a "water drop" notch for the camera, an in-screen fingerprint reader, Dolby Atmos-capable stereo speakers, a 32MP front camera, 4035mAh battery and more as you'll see below.

Michael Tran, MD of OPPO Australia said: "The Reno 5G and Reno 10x Zoom are transforming smartphone technology and raising consumer expectations of what's possible in a device.

"The Reno Z provides Aussies with game-changing power and the most immersive audio-visual experience available, making it one of the best devices in its price bracket.

"Making premium accessible is, and always will be a priority at OPPO. The Reno Z does just that, taking a number of impressive features from across the Reno Series and making them accessible to Aussies, no matter their budget."

Alex Zaharov-Reutt

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