VOCUS STARTS WORK ON HONIARA-SYDNEY CABLE

WORK BEGINS ON HONIARA-SYDNEY LEG OF CORAL SEA CABLE

The Vocus Group has begun work to lay the part of the 4700-km Coral Sea Cable System that connects Honiara and Sydney, with a ceremony held in the Solomon Islands.

The fibre-optic system will link the Honiara to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and Sydney, Australia and deliver a minimum of 20Tbps capacity to both the Solomons and PNG. The system will have a total capacity of 40Tbps.

A statement from Vocus said 42 repeaters would be placed along the length of the cable between Honiara and Sydney. A cross-section of cable is pictured being shown to Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare (left).

Vocus chief executive, Enterprise & Government, Andrew Wildblood, said the project was making excellent progress.

"This is a large scale and complex submarine cable build and our team, together with our partners, are doing a great job. It's exciting to reach more key milestones and for this cable system to be taking shape," he said.

"Our progress to date is testament to the expertise in fibre networks and large-scale project management we have at Vocus, and the strong relationships we have with the Australian Government agencies and stakeholders involved.

"Vocus is very proud of our role in building critical infrastructure for the people, businesses and communities of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands."

The deal to build the cable system was originally awarded to Huawei Telecommunications.

The Solomon Islands then changed its mind after the intervention of the spy agency, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service. Australian taxpayers will foot most of the $200 million cost of the cable, with the Solomons and the PNG making small contributions.

The contract was **formally signed** on 19 June 2018. The cable system, along with a 730km submarine cable system connecting Honiara to Auki (Malaita Island), Noro (New Georgia Island) and Taro Island, is set to be completed by the end of the year.

Sam Varghese

UP TO 4 MILLION AUSTRALIANS COULD UPGRADE TO 5G PHONE

About 1.1 million Australian consumers aged 16 and above have indicated that they are very likely to buy a 5G-enabled smartphone when they next upgrade, with a further 2.9 million indicating that they would be somewhat likely to do so.

The mobile operating system tracker Kantar Worldpanel ComTech said in its latest report, which took in figures up to the end of June, that about 7% of Australian consumers above the age of 16 were aware of 5G and its potential, while a further 34% had some level of understanding about the technology.

These two segments totalled about 7.7 million.

On the Australian front, Kantar said there was little movement in the share of iOS or Android in the second quarter of the year, with iOS share growing 0.7 percentage points to 33% compared to the corresponding period a year ago.

The iPhone XR was the iOS top-seller, with a share of 7.3%.

"Exclusive promotions, good tariff deals, trade-in schemes and advertising have all played an important role in driving purchase for this model, which skews slightly towards females and ages under 25 and 35-49," the company said.

"Eighty-nine percent of iPhone XR owners are repeat Apple buyers, having previously owned another iPhone device."

As far as Android share was concerned, the figure was 66.*%, unchanged from the previous quarter.

Samsung saw a small decline to 34.5 year-on-year but was still the leading seller. Its Galaxy models took 13.9% of the market with the 5G-enabled version almost reaching 1%.

Past experience was cited as a key purchase driver for those who bought the S10+ device, in addition to exclusive promotions, good tariff deals and cashback/voucher schemes, particularly among Telstra customers. More than two-thirds of the 5G-enabled model upgraded from the S10+.

Other brands which were doing well included OPPO which retained its position as the third on the table, grabbing 6.6% of Australian sales. Two models, the AX5 and the R17/R17 Pro, were its best-selling phones.

Google took 3.3% of the Australian market, putting it in fifth place, after Huawei/Honor, which reached 5.7%. Most buyers of the Google Pixel were former Apple and Samsung users.

Sam Varghese

ACMA WARNS V4 TELECOM OVER POOR COMPLAINTS HANDLING

Telco V4 Telecom has been warned by the Australian Communications and Media Authority over its "inadequate" complaints handling, as the regulator continues its industry-wide clampdown on non-compliance with complaints handling standards.

The ACMA – which says telcos' need to "lift their game" on complaints handling - said on Thursday it had issued a formal warning to V4 Telecom after an investigation found some customers could not contact the telco to complain after a service outage.

The ACMA said V4 Telecom also failed to tell customers who made contact what it was doing to restore their services and did not keep complete records of the complaints.

"As a result, V4 Telecom has contravened multiple provisions of the Complaints Handling Industry Standard between July and December 2018. The Standard was introduced by the ACMA to improve consumers' experience in dealing with their telco," the ACMA notes.

The ACMA has also directed V4 Telecom to comply with the Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code (TCP Code) after the telco moved more than 30 customers to another wholesale network without notifying them.

And in a further warning, the ACMA said if it finds further breaches of the complaints provisions by V4 Telecom, stronger enforcement options may be applied – and cautioning that telcos face penalties of up to $250,000 for failing to comply with ACMA directions to comply with the TCP Code.

ACMA Chair Nerida O'Loughlin said "consumers have a right to expect that complaints to their telco provider will be heard, acknowledged and answered" and "it's unacceptable for customer complaints not to be dealt with promptly".

Under the standard telcos are required to meet minimum standards and timeframes when managing complaints.

The ACMA said it is monitoring telcos' customer complaints handling as a compliance priority in 2019-2020.

The investigation of V4 Telecom is the ACMA's 42nd investigation into complaints handling in 12 months, resulting in four telcos receiving remedial directions and 28 receiving formal warnings.

"Proper handling of customer complaints should be a high priority for telcos. It's apparent however, that some telcos need to lift their game. Telcos are on notice that the ACMA will deal firmly with continued non-compliance with the Standard," O'Loughlin warned.

Peter Dinham

HOME AFFAIRS SEEKS RETENTION OF IP AND MAC ADDRESSES

The Department of Home Affairs wants IP addresses, MAC addresses and port numbers to be added to the list of data retained by providers under the existing data retention regime, according to a submission made to a review of the law.

The **submission**, made to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security review of the mandatory data retention regime that is part of the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Act, also suggested that the period of data retention be extended beyond the current two years, though this point was not argued forcefully.

In arguing for retaining MAC addresses, the department submission said: "For example, including media access control (MAC) addresses and devices which identify serials would provide better information as to which device was being used at the time of an offence."

Historical communications data	Range of retention
Subscriber information – name and address	7 years or longer
Telephone numbers called/received	6 weeks to 7 years
Telephone numbers associated with an SMS	60 days to 7 years
Mobile handset and Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) data	Up to 7 years
Internet Protocol (IP) account, device and address information	90 days to 3 years
Addresses associated with email and other IP communications	45 days to 3 years

One case was cited as evidence for this: "In a recent case in Victoria, a mobile phone containing pictures of a terminally ill child was stolen at a shopping centre.

"Victoria Police were able to use the shopping centre's security infrastructure to track MAC addresses in order to obtain surveillance footage of possible offenders. Charges have since been laid."

The department's argument for retaining IP addresses and port numbers was limited to one sentence: "Similarly, including IP addresses and port numbers to attribute data accessed on mobile phones, would allow agencies to make better use of mobile phone data."

The department submission conceded that retaining the current period of data retention — two years — was "the most appropriate way forward".

However, it also advanced several arguments about the use of older data in cases which it claimed backed its contention "that data held by commercial entities for longer periods can prove critical to prolonged investigations".

The demand for release of data fell after introduction of the law — in 2014-15 the number of requests was 363,336 and this dropped to 295.676 in the first full year of operation of the law.

But the submission claimed "while the rate of use of telecommunications data has not significantly altered since the introduction of the Data Retention Act, the consistent volume of use demonstrates that this data remains a highly valued tool for law enforcement and intelligence agencies in their efforts to provide a safe and secure environment".

Number of authorisations made in FY2016-17 by age of data
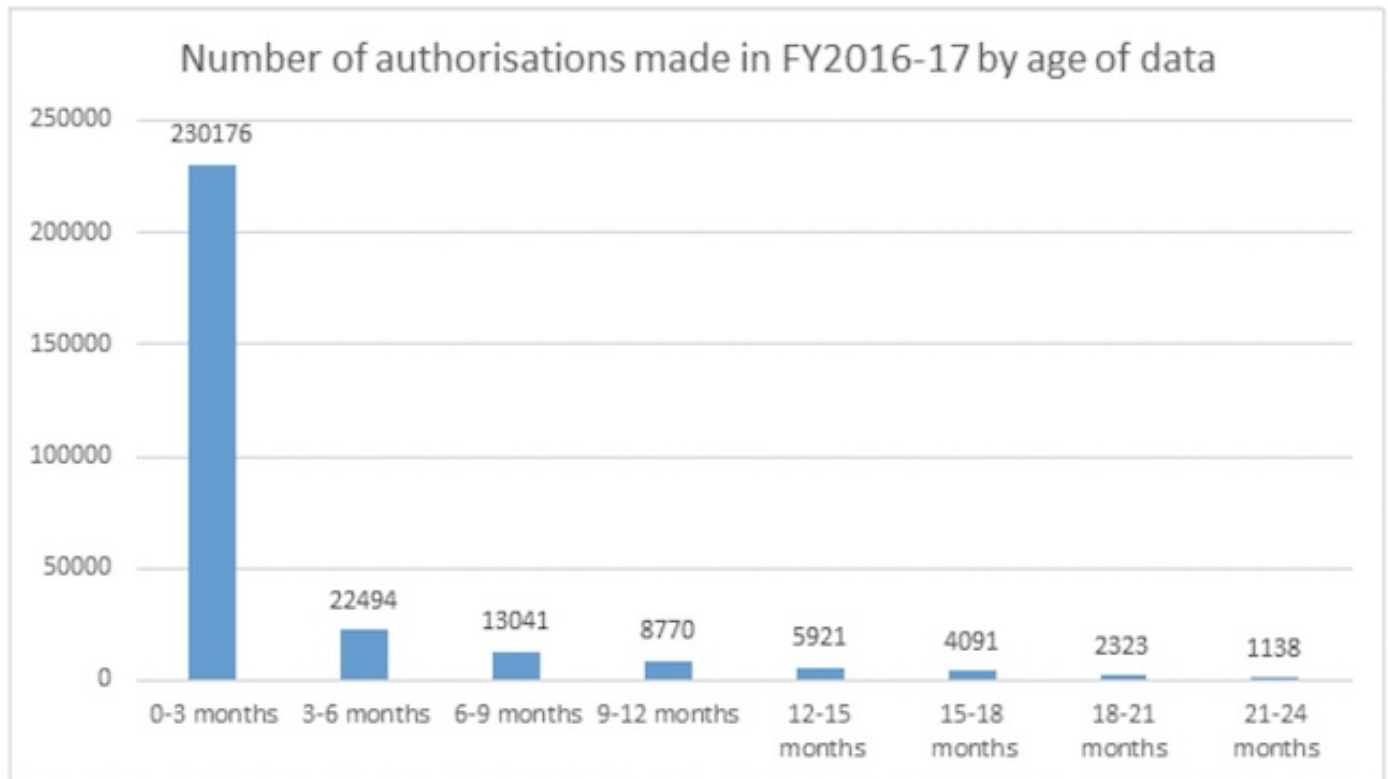
In 2017, the Australian Federal Police **confessed** to having illegally obtained the metadata of a journalist, due to what was put down to "just human error".

The submission claimed the Commonwealth Ombudsman had found this was due to "a failure of administrative process and not an attempt to evade the oversight protections".

At the time, the then AFP chief Andrew Colvin told the media on a Friday afternoon that the officers were unaware that they needed to obtain a warrant to access the metadata of the journalist in question.

The AFP informed the Ombudsman of the screw-up on the Wednesday of that week.

Regarding this, the submission said: "The timely and transparent investigation of this matter demonstrates that the considerations and oversight mechanisms governing the oversight of journalist information are effective."

The PJCIS has to submit its report on the review to Parliament by 13 April 2020.

Sam Varghese

MOBILE MONEY TRANSFERS TO HIT 203 BILLION-PLUS IN 2024

Worldwide mobile money transfer volumes will exceed 203 billion in 2024, up from 130 billion in 2019, according to new research which reveals that country domestic transfers are being driven by increasingly easy mobile payment systems.

New research — **Digital Money Transfer & Remittances: Domestic & International Markets 2019-2024** — from Juniper shows that a rise in social payments is driving growth in the mobile P2P channel, with domestic P2P payments accounting for 80% of all domestic transfers in 2024.

In developed markets, digital wallets have made P2P payments far simpler, with services including PayPal, Venmo and Cash App enabling low cost, fast and secure payments for a rapidly growing number of users.

"Payments via Venmo have a strong social element, which has boosted its popularity with millennials.

"The introduction of Libra by Facebook will further leverage social features, boosting the potential of social payments in a vast addressable market," Juniper says.

Research author Nick Maynard said: "Social payments are highly appealing to younger users, as they enable simple and effective digital payments to displace cash. However, data security concerns about mixing payments and social networks will impact consumer attitudes among older users."

And according to Juniper, in developing markets, mobile money provided by network operators is a key enabler of financial inclusions, enabling the "unbanked" to enter into the wider digital economy.

Maynard says that, largely due to the "red envelope" phenomenon in China during the Chinese New Year, Chinese transactions would account for 68% of the total volume of domestic mobile transfers in 2019.

"Alipay and WeChat Pay have become a crucial part of the process and will drive future growth in this market. However, China's share of the overall transaction volume will gradually fall, accounting for a reduced 57% by 2024.

"Growth is fastest in Africa, while operator-driven mobile money solutions are boosting financial inclusion at a rapid rate," Maynard said.

Peter Dinham