

# CommsWire

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## FREE DIGITAL PHONE SERVICES UNDER TRIAL IN SA



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# CONNEXUS PILOTS 'PAY-IT-FORWARD' FREE DIGITAL PHONE SERVICE

**The South Australian town of Gawler will be the first regional community to receive free digital phone services under a 'Pay it Forward' scheme to be conducted by Melbourne-based ISP, Connexus.**

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The project to be implemented by Connexus – part of the listed Australian telecommunications provider MNF Group - has the dual aims of providing local businesses with “future-proof, jargon-free telecommunication services while creating a significant boost to the local economy”.

Connexus says its funding of its “world-first initiative” will provide free digital phone services to local SMBs for 12 months.

And in exchange, local businesses are being asked to ‘pay it forward’ and spend with other businesses in their local community.

Connexus says by encouraging businesses to spend the money – money that would have gone towards their phone bills - with other local businesses, it is hoped that the Pay it Forward program will help supercharge the local economy.

Those taking part in the scheme can use the #payitfwd hashtag on social media to highlight their participation.

“Community and small businesses are the lifeblood of Australia. Our intention is to help boost these businesses and we are thrilled to be piloting this world-first initiative in Gawler,” Connexus’ general manager Lee Atkinson says.

“At Connexus, we are focused on empowering a new generation of SMBs and to do that we need to bust open and crush myths around how onboarding new technologies is difficult. Increased productivity and time savings are there for the taking, but we recognise that some businesses just need a little help in getting there.”

Connexus will monitor the local economic impact of the program over the year and will track social return on issues such as productivity, employment, engagement and community wellbeing.

During this period, Gawler’s local businesses will also be supported with TEDX-style educational events and community activations to further accelerate their growth.

Atkinson believes the regional investment program will help create significant value to Gawler and is actively seeking additional towns across Australia to participate in this ground-breaking regional investment program.

The Pay it Forward pilot in Gawler kicks off this month and Connexus says it already has a large number of businesses signed up to participate.

**Peter Dinham**

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## OPTUS TURNS TO MYRIOTA FOR SATELLITE IOT CONNECTIVITY

**Optus Business has struck a deal with nanosatellite operator Myriota. The arrangement between Optus and Myriota provides a way to deliver remote and regional connectivity for IoT devices and applications.**

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The companies say this is the first deal between a major Australian telco and a nanosatellite provider.

It has the potential to combine Optus' national networks and digital enablement capabilities with Myriota's direct-to-orbit technology, allowing massive scale, low-cost communications for IoT devices, even in remote areas.



A key feature of nanosatellite technology is that it allows low-cost connectivity with very low power consumption, so devices can run for months or years on one battery.

“Working with innovative startups like Myriota allows Optus Business to help our customers capture the business improvements of next generation technologies,” said Optus Business managing director Chris Mitchell.

Myriota CEO and co-founder Alex Grant said "Remote connectivity has long been the missing piece of the puzzle for IoT across industries like logistics and farming, and we are thrilled to partner with Optus Business to provide a comprehensive connectivity offering."

He added “By combining Optus' national networks with our nanosatellite capability, we are able to offer a truly holistic IoT solution and help solve connectivity issues being faced in regional Australia.”

Optus' parent company Singtel is a shareholder in Myriota via its Singtel Innov8 venture capital operation.

**Stephen Withers**



# John de Ridder

Telecommunications Economist

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# REMOTE PARTS OF NT GET MOBILE COVERAGE FOR FIRST TIME

**Optus has switched on two new mobile sites in the Northern Territory as it progresses work on its mobile blackspot program.**

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Optus says the two-new satellite small cell sites located at Wangi Falls and Florence Falls bring much needed mobile coverage to parts of the Territory for the first time.

The new cells allow visitors to the falls with the ability to make and receive calls - and will also provide coverage for all visitors to make calls to emergency services regardless of their network carrier.

Optus says an additional site will also be delivered close to the Ranger Station in the western part of the Park later this year providing coverage to Walker Creek.

“It’s wonderful to be able to switch on these two new Mobile Black Spot sites in these remote parts of the Northern Territory, bringing coverage to these amazing tourist areas,” said Andrew Sheridan, Optus Vice President Regulatory and Public Affairs.

“This is such a breathtaking part of Australia and new coverage will play a critical role in providing dedicated coverage for tens of thousands of annual visitors, giving them the ability to check in with friends and family and critically helping to ensure their safety while visiting these picturesque, but remote falls.”

Optus was awarded 25 sites across the Northern Territory as part of the Government’s rounds two and four of its Mobile Black Spot Program.

“With eight new Mobile Black Spot sites already live in the Northern Territory these two sites will play an important role in addressing the need for mobile coverage across the Territory,” Sheridan said.

“We worked closely with the Northern Territory Tourism Board and Parks NT to identify the best location for these sites based on visitor numbers and need and it’s great to see our customers already benefiting from them.”

Minister for Regional Services, Decentralisation and Local Government, Mark Coulton said the base stations already online have enabled more than 33,000 Triple 0 calls to be made.

“Through the first four rounds of the program, funding has been committed to deliver 1047 new base stations, thanks to more than \$760 million in co-investment, bringing new and improved mobile coverage to areas like Wangi Falls and Florence Falls.”

Optus has so far delivered 85 Mobile Black Spot sites across regional, rural and often remote parts of Australia - with satellite small cells providing a flexible alternative to a traditional mobile tower, using satellite connectivity and backhaul to deliver mobile coverage to a concentrated local area.

**Peter Dinham**



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## AUSTRALIANS EMBRACE MULTIPLE ENTERTAINMENT SUBSCRIPTIONS

**Australians have a growing taste for sports and video entertainment content sending the SVOD services market to new heights, reaching 12.3 million total subscriptions at the end of June, according new research from technology analyst firm, Telsyte.**

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According to the Telsyte research, a solid year-on-year increase of 29% has driven subscription up from 9.5 million in June 2018 – and today more than half (55%) of Australian households subscribe to SVOD services.

The research also reveals that households continue to show a demand for multiple services, with 43% having more than one SVOD service, up from 30% in 2018, which Telsyte says has steadily been increasing as consumers turn to multiple providers that are battling it out for content rights.



The Telsyte Australian Entertainment Subscription Study 2019 also found Netflix is the market leader with around 4.9 million subscriptions, and Stan passed the 1.7 million mark at the end of June 2019, remaining the second largest single service provider.

Telsyte's research also reveals that the sports SVOD category saw continued strong demand, driven by adoption of Kayo Sport, Optus Sport and AFL, FFA, Netball and NRL Live passes via Telstra.

And Telsyte estimates the total "sports" SVOD category (excluding Foxtel Now as it provides a mix of sports and other entertainment content) had around 4.4 million subscriptions at the end of June 2019, up from 3.6 million in June 18, driven by new services and telecom services bundles.

The report also found the total Pay TV market maintained just over 3 million subscriptions at the end of June, including cable, satellite and IPTV Fetch TV.

Foxtel's Pay TV segment, which has been under continued pressure due to increasing adoption of SVOD, including its own base shifting to Foxtel Now and Kayo Sport. Fetch TV remained the growth engine for the Pay TV market.

And Telsyte's latest consumer survey shows those willing to pay for video subscription services have an average monthly budget of around \$30 to cover all their video entertainment needs – with the same survey also showing 1 in 3 Australians have no set limit to the number of paid video subscription services they would simultaneously subscribe.

“Subscriptions will be a critical way entertainment and technology brands connect with and monetise their customers,” Telsyte managing director, Foad Fadaghi says.

Telsyte says that SVOD services have been proven to be “highly sticky” in Australia and its latest consumer survey shows nearly half of existing SVOD users believe there will always be enough new content to keep them interested and will not cancel their service - regardless of how many hit TV shows the service has to offer.

According to Telsyte, total SVOD subscriptions could reach more than 21 million by the end of June 2023 to meet Australians' appetite for content.

Telsyte says it believes the demand of existing and new SVOD services will be driven by key content rights during the next 12 to 24 months as more studios and content producers prepare to launch direct services.

Telsyte research also shows 1 in 4 Australians (and 37% of existing SVOD users) are interested in subscribing to a “potential new powerful entrant” in Disney.

The research shows there is an opportunity to cross bundle different type of subscription services such as SVOD and streaming music services, while only 1 in 3 Australians subscribe to both SVOD and music streaming services.

Among those who do not subscribe to both services, around 1 in 6 would be interested in subscribing to bundled services if it will cost them less to subscribe to the services separately, and according to Telsyte this might be an opportunity for global players such as Google, Amazon and Apple.

Telsyte says that streaming music continues to grow and, as with TV, the streaming music subscriptions market continued to grow steadily driven by service bundles, regular promotions and rapid adoption of smart speakers.

Telsyte estimates Australians have taken up more than 12 million streaming music subscriptions at the end of June 2019, with 42% being paid subscriptions.

The top 3 streaming music service providers in Australia remained Spotify, Google (including Google Play Music, YouTube Music and YouTube Premium) and Apple.

Telsyte says that the usage of streaming music has just taken over radio time with the average subscriber listening 7.5 hours a week, compared to 7.3 hours for radio.

Telsyte forecasts there will be 16.2 million streaming music subscriptions by the end of June 2023.

The research firm says the availability of very large mobile data caps has been influencing consumer behaviour around radio consumption, facilitating more streaming in car.

On gaming as a key subscription market. Telsyte anticipates the gaming market to become the other major entertainment subscription segment alongside streaming video and music subscription services as consumers are becoming more comfortable with the subscription model.

And Telsyte research shows Australians have already taken up more than 4 million games related subscriptions at the end of June 2019, consisting of computer and console games subscriptions (such as EA Access and Xbox Game Pass), and massively multiplayer online game (MMOG) subscriptions (such as World of Warcraft) and console subscriptions (e.g. PlayStation Plus, Xbox Live Gold).

Now Telsyte estimates the number of games subscriptions could quadruple to more than 16 million by the end of June 2023 with better access to fast Internet connectivity, the arrival of next generation game consoles and new services such as Apple Arcade and Google Stadia that appeal to a broader audience with the ability to play on different devices.

Telsyte research shows around 12.7 million Australians play digital games across devices and more than 8 million play on smartphones alone – while the same research shows 42% of Australians that play games are interested in game subscription services and 1 in 4 are interested in cloud gaming services.

“Game subscriptions have been more focused on consoles and computers, but there are untapped opportunities on mobile with a large base of casual and regular players,” Telsyte Senior Analyst, Alvin Lee, says.

Telsyte says it expects there will be more than 15 million 5G handsets in use by the end of June 2023, “forming the foundation for cloud gaming services adoption”.

**Peter Dinham**

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