

CommsWire

Essential daily reading for the communications industry executive

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TELECOMS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS 2ND RND OPEN



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GOVT OPENS ROUND 2 OF TELECOMS IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS POLICY

The Australian Government has called for further submissions on its proposed policy update designed to improve the delivery of telecommunications in new developments.

The proposals follow an initial round of public consultation that the Government concluded early this year.

The Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Paul Fletcher said it was clear from earlier stakeholder feedback that the main features of the Telecommunications in New Developments (TIND) policy “remain appropriate, but changes can be made to improve the market’s operation and simplify the policy going forward.”



Minister Fletcher (pictured left) said that under the proposed update of the policy, the provision of telecommunications networks in new real estate developments, including pit and pipe and active networks, will continue to be the responsibility of developers.

“A key proposal is that the current charges levied by NBN Co on developers would become caps. NBN Co would be able to charge below the cap, which would put downward pressure on prices.

“NBN would also have greater flexibility to install competing infrastructure where it is commercially viable, giving it more scope to respond to competition, subject to the usual competition and competitive neutrality rules,” the Minister stressed.

The proposed changes seek to place the provision of telecommunications in new developments on a more sustainable footing for the future, and also take into account the proposed statutory infrastructure provider laws that are currently before the Parliament.

Consistent with those laws, carriers will be responsible for servicing the developments where they have been contracted to provide infrastructure.

The Government is also developing wholesale service standards that will apply to statutory infrastructure providers servicing new developments, and submissions to the Government on the proposed policy are due by 5pm on Monday 8 June.

Peter Dinham

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NBN CO SAYS BROADBAND NETWORK ROLLOUT NEAR COMPLETION

NBN Co, the operator of the National Broadband Network, is claiming an earlier than planned activation of connections to the network for more than seven million homes and businesses across Australia, with the network rollout near completion.

According to NBN Co the latest activation milestone means it has met its 2020-23 corporate plan target for 30 June 2020 two months ahead of schedule – achieving one million connections in the last six months alone.



The Federal Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, Paul Fletcher, said the importance of fast, affordable broadband delivered quickly has never been clearer than during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

“Our focus on rolling out the network as quickly as possible means more than seven million homes and businesses are able to effectively learn, work and stay connected with loved ones as we all practice social distancing measures,” Minister Fletcher said.

“Since social distancing measures took effect at the end of February, NBN Co has connected around 300,000 homes and businesses to the network. Today there are 68% of existing customers and 80% of new customers who are choosing retail plans with peak speeds of 50 Mbps or higher.

“The Liberal National Government inherited a mess from Labor when we came to government in 2013, with only 50,000 premises connected to the fixed line network. Thanks to our work in turning the rollout around, Australians are well supported with access to fast broadband through this health crisis.”

The Minister said the network build is now more than 97% complete, with 11.2 million premises ready to connect, and the remainder on track to be completed this year.

He said NBN Co has added up to 40% extra capacity to retailer service providers free of charge since social distancing arrangements were put in place and is providing additional data for Sky Muster customers in regional and remote areas.

NBN Co also recently announced a \$150 million financial relief package so internet providers can support families and businesses to stay connected during COVID-19.

Peter Dinham

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GOVERNMENT HAS A TIN EAR WHEN IT COMES TO PRIVACY CONCERNS

COMMENT: If Australians had doubts that the Government has a tin ear when it comes to privacy concerns, those would have disappeared after its choice of Amazon Web Services as the company that will store data collected by the COVID-19 contact-tracing app.

There are three Australian companies — Vault, Sliced Tech and Macquarie Government — as well equipped as AWS to store top-secret government data. Why were none of them considered? After all, the data is going to be stored in Australia – or so the Government avers.



Last time I looked, AWS had as many as five lobbyists to push its cause in Canberra. Could that have anything to do with this decision? It's interesting to note that the prime minister has been given the Twitter handle #ScottyFromMarketing by many an Australian.

There is a lot of misinformation floating around about the app, AWS and the CLOUD (Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use

of Data) Act. Many people are content to parrot whatever the government says and take it at face value. Sad, but true.

Firstly, AWS [offers](#) the Australian Government the same service as it does to any other commercial company. Nothing more.

The certification given to the company by the Australian Signals Directorate to host government data has relevance only until the end of the current financial year. The intelligence agency [said clearly](#) last year that it would not be part of the picture any more.

Any government department that chooses a cloud provider has to do the due diligence itself before awarding a contract. This [makes it easier](#) for big companies to land contracts.

Data collected by the tracing app — given the rather Orwellian name COVIDSafe — will reside on AWS servers well beyond the end of June.

There is no requirement that AWS host the data in Australia or have the data handled only by Australians. Those requirements are not part of the AWS certification, which applies until the end of June.

So, if you, dear reader, are willing to trust your data to AWS, by all means download and install the app.

The CLOUD Act came into force [in March 2018](#). It was the end result of a case in which the FBI was demanding that Microsoft release data that it [Microsoft] had stored on its servers in Ireland.

The FBI said this data was relevant to a drug investigation it was conducting.

Microsoft argued that a warrant issued in the US did not apply to its offices in Ireland. And there the case lay for some time.

The Act changed existing US law so that enforcement warrants would apply to data stored anywhere in the world by US-based tech firms.

Does that apply to government data?

Well, when I asked the Australian Cyber Security Centre about this back in March last year, a spokesperson [said](#) that Australian Government data stored by American companies who had been certified as Protected cloud providers was not subject to the Act.

But what happens once the certification is no longer applicable as happens at the end of June? Your guess is as good as mine. The government has said nothing about this.

Now to the app itself.

Storing encryption keys on the same cloud as the data is a dangerous practice.

The model outlined by Dr Vanessa Teague and [reported](#) in *iTWire* on 23 April is a good one, coming as it does from a qualified, educated individual who understands cyber security.

But the problem is that we have numerous apparatchiks who are trying to push this opinion or that.

The president of the USA has a similar habit.

Muddying the waters at a time like this can lead to deaths, but to these charlatans that does not seem to matter much.

Should you download the app? The only thing I would recommend is that you do whatever you decide to do with your eyes wide open.

Finally, why does the government persist in putting Stuart Robert forward to talk about the app?

Why not get a used-car salesman or a real-estate dealer instead? The trust levels would be about the same – and the latter two may well have a better understanding of technology.

Sam Varghese

OPTUS SWITCHES ON TOWER AT VICTORIA'S BARANDUDA RANGES

Australia's second largest mobile operator Optus has switched on a new tower in the Baranduda Ranges in regional Victoria as it continues the rollout of sites as part of the Federal Government's mobile blackspot program.

Partnering with the Victorian Government, Optus says the new site means that more than 40 homes will now be able to connect to reliable mobile reception for the first time, providing them with the ability to make and receive calls, texts and browse the Internet.

The site is located along Beechworth-Wodonga Road, with the tower to provide coverage North East towards Wodonga.

Andrew Sheridan, Optus' Vice President of Regulatory and Public Affairs said, "Bringing much needed mobile coverage to the Baranduda Ranges is critical for residents and local communities".

"It not only means greater safety for those living, working and driving through this area by unlocking access to communication but also helps to facilitate contact with family and friends.

"This site will enable valuable opportunities for the local community, allowing regional Victoria to remain competitive with access to the same resources as the rest of Australia. Competition is not only essential for the economy, but also great for the community, with this new site providing customers with better choice and value."

"We know how important access to reliable mobile coverage is for those living and working across regional Australia, and right now it is more critical than ever. It's a certainly a bonus to be delivering this boost at such a crucial time when many families are currently in isolation and staying connected is essential for education, business and personal reasons."

Optus says it continues to invest in its network to improve coverage, reliability and speed across its Australian mobile network, with the new tower in the Baranduda Ranges providing a "competitive telecommunications alternative for local residents and businesses".

The mobile black spot program on 83 sites across regional Australia is co-funded by the Federal Government and Optus,

The Federal Government's ongoing Mobile Black Spot Program is co-funding another 83 sites to be developed by Optus.

The 83 sites taken on by Optus are located in New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Peter Dinham

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