



Friday, 2 July 2010

Trans-Tasman Mobile Roaming
ICT Regulatory Group
Ministry of Economic Development
PO Box 1473
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

Mobile Roaming
Spectrum and Wireless Services Branch
Department of Broadband,
Communications and the Digital Economy
GPO Box 2154
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

By email: transtasmanroaming@med.govt.nz
mobileroaming@dbcde.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Transparency in relation to Trans-Tasman Mobile Roaming Services

The Telecommunications Carriers' Forum (TCF), the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) and Communications Alliance (CA) ("the Associations") welcome the opportunity to jointly respond to the Ministry of Economic Development of New Zealand and the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy of Australia Discussion Document on *Trans-Tasman mobile roaming*, May 2010 (the Document).

This submission focuses on concerns raised in the Document that relate to the transparency of pricing in the mobile roaming market in New Zealand and Australia. However, the Associations or their members may also make individual submissions regarding this or other issues addressed in the Document.

The Associations note that their members have already implemented a range of measures to inform their customers of the costs, benefits and features of international mobile roaming in the trans-Tasman market. That said, it is the Associations' aim to continue to address any areas of concern around transparency issues and to strive for further improvement wherever possible.

To this end, the Associations and their relevant members will work together to develop a common understanding of what constitutes fair and reasonable pricing transparency in the context of international mobile roaming. The aim is to evaluate whether current measures to inform and empower customers and existing levels of transparency meet this understanding and customers' expectations. The next step is to assess whether and how any gaps between the two could be closed, and in what timeframe such actions could be taken.

More specifically, the following areas warrant further investigation on whether and how improved customer information and empowerment could be achieved:

- Consumer awareness of the costs and charges involved with roaming prior to and after leaving the country, including the use of voicemail services,
- Potential measures regarding roaming spend management tools, if technically feasible, e.g. high usage alerts and customer mandated spending caps,
- Consistent, comprehensive and easily accessible information on roaming charges, active customer information and warning to avoid “bill shocks”,
- Simplification of roaming charges, e.g. one price per call type and country (i.e. no network differentiation).

Whilst it would be premature to pre-empt the outcome of this investigation at this stage, any insights gained from this undertaking will be used to inform the relevant processes and to enhance transparency where necessary. We aim to apply a consistent approach to enhancing transparency in both Australia and New Zealand. However, how the agreed outcomes are implemented is likely to be different in the two jurisdictions of Australia and New Zealand due to the different regulatory and industry environments. In New Zealand, the TCF has formed a Working Party to consider this issue and develop an appropriate set of consumer information standards. An invitation to participate in this Working Party has been sent to all retail providers of mobile roaming services, the relevant Government agencies and consumer representatives. In the Australian context it is important to note that Communications Alliance, in close cooperation with the regulators, the industry and consumer representatives, is currently reviewing the Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code and Guideline with regards to possible improvements of customer service and consumer protection in the entire telecommunications industry, including international mobile roaming services.

The Associations would also like to observe that it is in the consumer’s interest not to limit service-based differentiation and innovation in trans-Tasman roaming services, or discourage innovation in how operators choose to present or market their roaming products. There is a balance to be struck between ensuring consumer information and protection, and not stifling carriers’ ability or incentives to differentiate their roaming services from competitors. Such differentiation is at the heart of the competitive process that brings benefits to consumers and telecommunication providers alike.

Note that all endeavours to increase transparency are not restricted to just trans-Tasman roaming, reflecting the reality that many operator efforts to improve transparency will naturally benefit consumers of all international roaming services. That said, there may be measures that are simpler to implement with trans-Tasman roaming services than for the rest of the world.

The Associations would be happy to discuss these issues in more detail at your convenience.

Yours sincerely,



David Stone
Chief Executive Officer

Telecommunications Carriers'
Forum



Chris Althaus
Chief Executive Officer

Australian Mobile
Telecommunications
Association



John Stanton
Chief Executive Officer

Communications Alliance