



TPG-OPTUS DEAL: Unlikely to dent Telstra, says analyst | Compete weighs in

VONEX: Board rejects Swoop's counter-offer to MaxoTel

10,028 opens
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SODA: Bevan Slattery talks the trials of subcable builds

COMMUNICATIONS DAY

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News and analysis for the ANZ telecom sector

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ACMA vindicated as Indara loses appeal over telco industry levy

The Full Federal Court has dismissed an appeal by Indara over the Australian Communications and Media Authority's application of the Telecommunications Industry Levy. The verdict confirms a relatively liberal scope for who is liable to pay the carrier fee and was welcomed by the regulator.

The long-running dispute between ACMA and Axicom, which is now part of Indara, dates back to finding by the regulator in late 2021 that the towerco owed \$1.86 million under the TIL scheme, which is used to part-fund the Universal Service Obligation regime.

An Axicom subsidiary, which ultimately generated no revenue and was part of a new business venture, held a carrier licence between mid-2019 and mid-2020, thus finding itself captured by the scheme which applies to licensed carriers that have \$25 million or more in telecommunications sales revenue in a year.

The Full Court's unanimous ruling noted that in September 2020 ACMA and Axicom exchanged emails with the regulator observing "that financial statements of Axicom HoldCo showed income of \$231.7 million in calendar year 2019 and that it was seeking information in relation to the 2019-2020 eligible revenue period."

"It emerged that \$200.6 million of that revenue was from leasing access to wireless communication sites and \$30.1 million came from management of the construction or installation of infrastructure," the ruling noted.

"The ACMA expressed the view on 28 September 2020 that the amount of \$200.6 million appeared not to be deductible and might be 'eligible revenue' for the purposes of the TIL.

In subsequent correspondence Axicom suggested the \$200.6 million came from being the owner "of passive infrastructure which it leased out" and that it "did not earn any 'telecommunications sales revenue'."

Indara advanced 13 grounds of appeal. "Ground 1 simply asserts that the primary judge erred in refusing to set aside the Eligible Revenue Assessment. The remaining



An Indara tower

grounds seek to justify that assertion of error,” the court noted. All 13 grounds were dismissed, with Indara told to pay ACMA’s legal costs.

“Indara is aware of the judgment that was handed down on Friday in relation to the telecommunications infrastructure levy. Indara is currently reviewing the decision,” a spokesperson for the company told CommsDay.

Rohan Pearce

Analyst: TPG-Optus deal unlikely to dent Telstra

Telstra’s dominance in Australia’s mobile market is unlikely to be slowed by the newly approved Optus-TPG network-sharing deal, according to New Street Research. However, despite the potential benefits for Optus and TPG, Telstra’s significant lead in mobile service revenue share—growing from 38% in 2005 to 56% in 2024—suggests the deal will not meaningfully alter Telstra’s market position.

According to New Street Research’s Ian Martin, Telstra’s superior network coverage, particularly in regional markets, is the result of strategic investments dating back nearly two decades.

“Telstra’s decision to build out its NextG network in 2005 created a stronghold in regional Australia that Optus and TPG have yet to effectively challenge,” the report stated. Over this period, Telstra’s sustained investment in regional infrastructure has left its competitors struggling, with Optus now generating less than half of Telstra’s revenue, while TPG stands at only 60% of Optus’s revenue.

The ACCC’s approval of the Optus-TPG MOCN deal was largely expected. The commission had previously blocked a similar agreement between Telstra and TPG in 2022, citing concerns over reduced competition.

However, New Street Research is sceptical about the deal’s ability to close the gap with Telstra. “While the MOCN deal presents an opportunity for Optus and TPG to enhance their regional offerings, it is unlikely to reverse the long-term trend of Telstra’s increasing revenue share,” the report stated. New Street Research emphasised that Telstra’s superior regional coverage, built over years of investment, will be difficult to challenge, even with the combined resources of Optus and TPG.

Optus has made multiple attempts to regain its regional market position, particularly after 2016, when it sought to expand its network coverage in key areas. However, according to New Street Research, Optus faced several challenges, including competition from over-the-top service providers and TPG’s attempt to become a fourth mobile network operator before its merger with Vodafone. “Optus was further hampered by its cyber-security breach and network outages, which slowed its recovery in the post-COVID market,” the report noted.

TPG, meanwhile, may focus its regional efforts on areas where it has an established fixed-line presence, such as parts of Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, and Canberra. However, New Street Research cautioned that this remains a long-term rebuild with material risks. “TPG’s success in regional areas will depend on how well it can execute its strategy and improve its service reputation,” the report suggested.

“Telstra’s long-standing investments in regional coverage will keep it ahead of Optus and TPG for many years,” New Street concluded. Even with improved network coverage and capacity expected from the Optus-TPG deal, both companies are likely

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OUR MC: MICHELLE LIM (COMMPETE EXC DIR) | TELSTRA INFRACO executive customer success and sales Dino Georgiou | NBN Co chief customer officer Anna Perrin (NEW) | NEW STREET RESEARCH analyst Ian Martin | TELSTRA INFRACO Principal, Fixed Backhaul and Intercity Fibre Products Vito Radice (NEW) | TELSTRA INFRACO senior engineer, network Nimita Bagadia | VOCUS COO wholesale & infrastructure Jarrod Nink | VOCUS head of ESG Amber Tattersall | OPTUS WHOLESAL head of product & marketing Andrew Stojcevski | OPTUS Director of Sustainability Helen Maisano (NEW) | SUPERLOOP CCO Nick Pachos (NEW) | NOKIA head of optics Oceania Antonio Ruggerio | ONENZ general manager fibre refresh Richard Mooney | FIBRECONX general manager, alliances & partnerships Kyle Bunting | Incoming COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE CEO Luke Coleman | SUPA CEO Geoff Horth | PIVOTEL head of wholesale James Douthwaite | XENITH IG EVP sales Dan Whitford | OLIVER WYMAN partner Zia Bhadiar | VENTURE INSIGHTS managing director David Kennedy | NBN Co general manager sustainability Stephen Smith | Including panel sessions on network sustainability and industry analysis plus the return of our annual NBN Showcase

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COMMSDAY Wholesale Congress

DAY 1 TUESDAY OCTOBER 15

KEYNOTE SESSION

9am Telstra InfraCo Customer Success and Sales Executive Dino Georgiou

9.25am Comms Alliance CEO Luke Coleman

9.50am Optus Wholesale Head of Product & Marketing Andrew Stojcevski,

10.15 Vocus Chief Operating Officer Wholesale & Infrastructure Jarrod Nink

10.40 Networking break by Maser

MORNING PLENARY

11.20 FibreconX General Manager, Alliances & Partnerships Kyle Bunting

11.45 Nokia – Head of Optics Oceania Antonio Ruggiero

12.10 Communications Compliance chair Gary Smith and CEO Visu Thangavelu

12.35 Superloop chief commercial officer Nick Pachos

1.00 Lunch sponsored by Superloop

2.00 Ciena speaker TBA

2.20 XenithIG EVP Sales Australia Dan Whitfield

2.40 Maser/YOFC director, international business Xiao Jiang Wen

3.00 Afternoon refreshment break

3.30 Australian Competition and Consumer Commission speaker TBA

3.50 Oliver Wyman analyst Zia Bhadiar

4.15 PANEL: The state of the wholesale telecom sector

| Oliver Wyman's Zia Bhadiar

| Venture Insight's David Kennedy

Agenda

| New Street Research's Ian Martin

5pm Cocktails sponsored by Nokia

DAY 2 WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 16

KEYNOTE SESSION

9.10 NBN Co chief customer officer Anna Perrin

9.35 CSG speaker TBC

10.00 OneNZ Richard Mooney, General Manager Fibre Refresh

10.25 Networking break by Maser

11.15 InfraCo Principal, Fixed Backhaul and Intercity Fibre Products Vito Radice

11.40 NBN Showcase

Hear from several leading NBN executives about the exciting plans in store from the national wholesaler. Speakers TBA

12.45 Spare slot

1.10 Lunch

2.00 SUPA Networks CEO Geoff Horth

2.20 Pivotal head of wholesale James Douthwaite

2.40 PANEL: Sustainability & ESG primer for telco wholesalers and retailers

| Telstra InfraCo Senior Engineer, Network Engineering Nimita Bagadia

| NBN GM sustainability, Stephen Smith

| Vocus head of ESG Amanda Tattersall

| Optus Director of Sustainability Helen Maisano

3.20 Lightning talks TBA

4.00 Close and final cocktails sponsored by Aussie Broadband



October 15/16 2024
Sofitel, Melbourne



February 25/26 2025
QT Hotel, Canberra



June 17/18 2025
Fullerton, Sydney

to trail Telstra in subscriber share and service quality for the foreseeable future. “Even with this network-sharing deal, Optus and TPG face an uphill battle in challenging Telstra’s dominance,” the report concluded.

Grahame Lynch

Commpete cautious, somewhat optimistic after Optus-TPG deal

Challenger telco alliance Commpete says it respects the competition regulator’s decision not to oppose the network-sharing deal between TPG Telecom and Optus. However, it said it remained concerned over some elements, including whether MNOs may have an incentive to restrict terms of wholesale access for MVNOs and challenger mobile networks.

“Commpete recognises that, on the surface, the proposed arrangement seems to reflect a genuine intent of utilising infrastructure sharing models which more closely resembles efficient use of infrastructure, and affords opportunity for greater breath in service-based competition through both retail and wholesale markets,” said Michelle Lim, who is consulting as Commpete’s executive director, after the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission released its decision last week. “However, the proof will be in the pudding,” she added.

Lim said that Commpete continued to be concerned about a lack of clarity whether the combined spectrum holdings exceed the “auction limits imposed by ministerial determination, and consequently if certain spectrum should reasonably be divested for use by other market participants.”

“There ought to be transparency – irrespective of whether a divestment is considered through this transaction, or policy and regulatory processes aimed at promoting competition for mobile services in the regions, as suggested by the ACCC,” Lim said.

The deal between the two MNOs included an agreement that allows Optus to use TPG spectrum in the 700MHz, 1800MHz, 3600MHz and 3700MHz in areas where the MOCN will operate. The provisions of the Radiocommunications Act mean the arrangement is considered an acquisition for the purposes of the Competition and Consumer Act

“Nationally licenced spectrum is typically only used in one third of Australia’s landmass, with the remaining two thirds lying fallow,” Lim said. “This is despite the potential for more targeted and innovative solutions utilising that spectrum to deliver services to the likes of mining, agriculture and first nations communities, delivering enhanced social and economic benefits in these areas.”

She also warned that there was “no guarantee that TPG wholesale customers will benefit from extended geographical reach on fair terms,” and that Commpete supported the ACCC’s intention to continue to monitor the impacts of the deal.

“The regulatory, technical, and commercial debate over the past few years has helped define new approaches for regional Australia,” Lim said. “This has included detailed analysis of the Telstra and TPG arrangements in 2022, neutral host active sharing and now the Optus and TPG arrangements.”

She also noted that Commpete was positive about proposed merger law reform

that could address the issue of serial or creeping mergers,

“There is still much to be done for regional, rural, and remote Australia,” Lim said, saying there was not a “one-size-fits-all approach” to address regional connectivity. However, she said that Commpete believes it is a “positive development for our national telco puzzle which can move the industry in a better direction.”

Rohan Pearce

Vonex board opposes competing takeover bid from Swoop

Vonex has confirmed it has received a competing takeover bid from Swoop Holdings at a nominal offer price of \$0.04 per share, but has urged shareholders to take no action in relation to the proposal.

The bid from Swoop is on paper higher than the \$0.0375 per share offer from Queensland-based VoIP provider Maxotel, which has been unanimously endorsed by the Vonex board. But in an ASX filing, the Vonex board said it does not consider Swoop’s offer to be superior, due in part to its conditional nature.

The Swoop offer is conditional on credit approval from Swoop’s lender, as well as the execution of a binding scheme implementation deed, which Vonex has not received a copy of, the filing states.

The Swoop indicative proposal states that financier Westpac “intends to make available an additional debt facility” to help fund the offer, but had yet to conduct a formal credit approval process at the time it was sent.

In addition, while the MaxoTel bid is an all-cash offer, the Swoop offer proposes by default to pay a maximum of 25% of the purchase price in cash and the remainder in Swoop shares valued at 23 cents per share. It does propose to give shareholders the option to either take 100% cash, 100% shares, or 50% cash and 50% shares, but this would be subject to a maximum total cash consideration payable by Swoop of \$3.8 million, which would represent only 25% of the overall offer price.

“Considering the conditionality and uncertainty around the Swoop offer there is no certainty that it will lead to a binding offer from Swoop. Accordingly, the Vonex board does not consider the Swoop offer to be superior to the MaxoTel offer and shareholders should take no action in relation to the Swoop offer. Vonex’s board continues to unanimously recommend that Vonex shareholders vote in favour of the scheme of arrangement with MaxoTel,” Vonex’s filing states.

To confirm the Swoop offer as a superior proposal would require formal confirmation that Swoop has secured unconditional and irrevocable finance approval for the deal. The board said it would then be concerned about the level of debt the combined entity would have, and the challenge of recommending shareholders roll from one over-leveraged business to another in a potentially similar position.

The board also does not consider an equity offer at a marginal price difference to be superior, so the deal would require an all-cash option, the filing adds. The offer would also require a minimum smoothing of recent movements in the Swoop share price, with the ratio fixed at the time of the deal.

Swoop had originally submitted its proposal in confidence, but made the offer pub-

lic on Thursday after the deadline for Vonex to respond to the offer had passed.

According to Swoop, if its offer is accepted the combined business would have proforma revenue for FY24 of around \$137 million. There are also opportunities for synergies that represent over \$5 million in EBIRDA on an annualised basis.

Shareholders are currently scheduled to vote on whether to approve the MaxoTel offer on 23 September. The MaxoTel offer implies an enterprise value for the Vonex business of \$34.4 million, which assumes an equity value of \$14.1 million and net debt of \$20.3 million.

Rohan Pearce

SODA's Bevan Slattery shares the trials and tribulations of subcable builds

SODA founder Bevan Slattery has shared candid details of some of the challenges of rolling out submarine cables as he marked a milestone of beginning construction of a Sydney landing station for his SMAP cable. During a presentation at an AUSNOG conference, Slattery discussed the project's importance in addressing rising cloud demand and geopolitical complexities in the Indo-Pacific region.

Slattery said the decision to build the Oman Australia Cable and now SMAP was largely driven by growing concerns over the geopolitical tensions and physical challenges that make maintaining undersea cables in the region difficult.

"I could see the driving of cloud demand, but I also saw real challenges in the Indo-Pacific in terms of geopolitics, and just getting ships and permits for maintenance was becoming increasingly difficult," Slattery explained. "There was an opportunity here, but it was also a threat because a lot of existing capacity could become a problem in the next decade."

These concerns led Slattery to conceptualise an express undersea cable that would bypass the congested Malacca Straits, connecting Australia directly to the Middle East via Oman. "It's the first express cable that operates directly from Australia to the Middle East and avoids Singapore entirely," Slattery said.

SMAP, which stands for Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, will be Australia's first Spatial Division Multiplexing cable, featuring 16 fibre pairs and offering 400 terabytes of capacity.

The SMAP cable's RFS date is projected for March 2026, though Slattery hinted it could come online sooner, depending on progress. "It might come a little earlier. We expect to finish construction by the end of next year, but with testing and the holiday season, March 2026 is a safe target."

One of the critical hurdles in deploying the SMAP cable has been navigating regulatory environments and physical obstacles, including unexploded ordnance zones in areas like Torquay. According to Slattery, the submarine cable landscape near Sydney's protection zone has become so crowded that SODA had to find alternative landing points outside of traditionally protected areas.

"The protection zones are packed. In Sydney, you could maybe fit one more cable in the southern zone, but even then, you'd have to deal with unexploded ordnance," Slattery said. He recounted a particularly vivid memory from a previous project when

a team accidentally pulled up a bomb while conducting maintenance. “We rang the Navy and asked what to do with it, and they just told us to put it back!” he joked.

The SMAP cable will be the first to land outside Sydney’s protection zone, with plans to drill near Maroubra. Slattery noted that gaining approval for these landings had been a challenging process involving local councils and state governments. To mitigate future regulatory difficulties, SODA has decided to prepare multiple drill paths for future cables. “We’re doing six drills now, not just for our cable, but to make it easier for the next five cables that might want to land in the same area. Once we’ve done the hard work, it’ll be easier for others to follow.”

Slattery said the SMAP cable system avoids traditional poly-jacket sheathing in favour of lightweight, more flexible protection. This decision came after extensive risk assessments and cost evaluations, including a \$20 million survey of the cable’s route.

“We looked at the cost of repairs, which can range between \$2 million to \$3 million per outage, and weighed it against the cost of additional protections,” Slattery said. “Ultimately, we opted for a lighter, more efficient system. Seventy percent of the SMAP trunk uses lightweight protection, particularly in the Southern Ocean, where the ocean floor is very benign and less prone to damage.”

Slattery (right) also discussed the integration of FiberSense technology, which provides real-time situational awareness for detecting potential threats or outages before they occur. FiberSense uses advanced digital signal processing and machine learning to monitor submarine cables for external interference, such as fishing activities, trawling, or shipping anchors dragging across cables.

“My mantra is that I want to know about an outage before the customer does. With FiberSense, we can monitor our network at a very granular level and detect potential problems early,” Slattery explained.

One particularly interesting application of FiberSense technology involves detecting marine life. Slattery shared an anecdote about how the technology could even identify the presence of whales near the cables.

“We detected a whale, not just its location, but we could identify the type of whale based on the low-frequency sound it was making,” he said. “The technology allows us to create a phased array over a 50-kilometre span, so we could pinpoint exactly where the whale was. The geeks on the team were very excited.”

Slattery said FiberSense technology is being integrated into all of SODA’s fronthaul and backhaul systems in Australia.



Grahame Lynch

Kearney sees AI-driven EBITDA opp for telco

AI-based technologies have the potential to unlock gains in EBITDA in the realm of 10-20%, according to Kearney's Anshuman Sengar.

"We are back in 1995 when Internet became the technology which reshaped the world forever," said Sengar, who is APAC lead digital and AI transformation as well as ANZ practice lead communications, media and technology at the consultancy. "Gen AI has the same potential, but we are not fully aware of what it can unlock — and no-one understands it fully."

"I think it's already delivering," he told CommsDay. "It is a technology which is already there right now, right here. I understand the scepticism around all of it, because like every technology change, there is a timing to it."

He noted that the widespread adoption of the Internet in 1995 was followed by the dot-com crash. "But Internet was still real," he said. "Smartphone: first year sales were 5 million handsets, which is nothing, but it just changed the way we live. So I do feel AI, and gen AI, is real. It will take its time, but the technology is here now."

Kearney is working with telco globally on three main areas, according to Sengar. (pictured) Those are AI/generative AI strategy and roadmap with a horizon of three to five years, covering use cases, talent roadmap, tech infrastructure, partnership and investment; designing data and AI governance and operating model to help scale AI across the organisation; and building AI platforms and infrastructure.



Telcos and corporates more broadly are struggling because they are trying to embed it into their current business model "as is" and take a too-incremental approach, he suggested.

Sengar argued: "I think you do need a holistic, company-level plan because of three reasons. One is capital is constraints. So you need to, as a business, take a view on how much capital do you need to deploy, in which area and how do you make sure you get the best return, — and hence you need to take a holistic view."

The second factor is talent, he said. "I think talent is a very big constraint. And I'm not even talking about talent at junior levels, even the executive talent who understands AI and data AI is very limited. So you do again need to figure out what's your overall talent roadmap.

"I actually feel that 30% to 50% of skills in any business, including telco, will be significantly less relevant in three years because you need to retrain yourself. So if you are someone who runs shop, if you are someone who runs contact centre, I have question marks whether that skill will be needed in three to five years. It won't be."

The third factor driving the need for a holistic AI strategy is governance, he said: "You do need to kind of govern it as a company together, so that whatever you do is governed centrally or consistent. Your principles, philosophy, ethics of AI are consistent at a common company level versus you [allow] business units to drive it."

Sengar added: "I think whether we call it strategy, whether we call it roadmap, whether we call it investment case, every company needs a holistic assessment across

the four dimensions of what use cases I want to do, what's my infrastructure strategy, what's my people and talent strategy and how will I govern it essentially? We actually call it 'think build, scale, govern'. You need to have a clear plan on all those four dimensions."

According to Sengar, top telcos in the US, EU and APAC are increasing their AI spend to around 12-15% of their IT budget, or 0.6-0.9% of revenue. The people cost represents around 35-50%, while storage and compute are another 25-40% of AI spending.

In the telco space Sengar sees three waves for adoption. The first is customer engagement and contact centres. "A lot of companies have invested in contact centre platforms — Google, Apple, Amazon — and those platforms allow easy AI scalability and then there are a lot of startups which are in customer engagement. That to me is right here, right now — it is happening."

The second area is productivity. "How do you use AI engine AI in your legal department, in your procurement department, in your sales for ease of contracting, ease of knowledge management? If I have to come and train my store staff on my 200 products, they don't need to read 200 product manuals. Gen AI can make it easy to train them." He cited software development as another example.

"Companies are still grappling with how to go about it, where to start, but there are companies who are doing it," he said. "I also know of telco clients who have automated a lot of their marketing stack using gen AI and AI."

The third wave will be focused on networks including self-healing networks, AI-driven personalisation, and security and fraud detection. On networks it includes self-healing networks and supporting a reduction in truckrolls through preventative maintenance.

Rohan Pearce

ComCom instructs cellcos to develop standard coverage maps

The Commerce Commission is requiring all three mobile operators to standardise their coverage maps to make it easier for New Zealand consumers to compare coverage between providers, and to allow consumers to exit without penalty if they face coverage problems.

Spark, One NZ and 2degrees will now have to collaborate to standardise their coverage maps within 12 months. Each company will also need to introduce exit right requirements within six months for customers experiencing coverage that does not match what these maps show.

The companies will be required to agree on a standard set of coverage descriptors, such as 'excellent', 'good', 'fair', and 'no coverage', as well as the signal strength thresholds for each descriptor.

Mobile operators will also be required to implement the ability for consumers to access their coverage maps using a maximum of two clicks from the provider's homepage within six months, and provide links to maps in material related to coverage or plans.

The exit right should meanwhile operate similarly to the network guarantee already offered by One NZ and 2degrees to their new customers, enabling consumers to exit without cost if they are not provided with the promised coverage.

Telecommunications Commissioner Tristan Gilbertson said the regulator's research indicates that almost 20% of residential consumers and 30% of SME consumers are not satisfied with their mobile coverage. Meanwhile 10% of residential consumer and 16% of SME consumers have had at least one issue with their mobile coverage in the past 6 months.

"Coverage is a key consideration for consumers but can vary considerably across networks. It's never 100% everywhere. Too many Kiwis are signing up to find that they're not getting the coverage they expected, so we've been working with stakeholders on how to help consumers make more confident and informed choices," he said. "We're pleased to have landed a series of improvements that build on existing industry practices to enable better comparison and choice for consumers."

The Commission's research also shows that 81% of consumers believe it would be helpful if all telcos had to show a coverage map that was consistent across the industry.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

TCF wants a sector analysis before telcos are included in CDR regime

The New Zealand Telecommunications Forum is advocating that the government be required to conduct a thorough sector analysis before determining whether the telecom or other sectors should be included within the nation's proposed Consumer Data Right regime.

In its submission to the Economic Development, Science and Innovation Committee on the proposed Customer and Product Data Bill, the TCF said consideration of a CDR scheme should be done sector by sector.

A CDR is best suited for sectors where service providers unfairly exploit their market position or disregard user privacy and agency, the submission states. "This is not the case for all sectors, including telecommunications," the TCF said. "The telecommunications sector is very competitive. With around 150 retailers, consumers have many providers to choose from. Month to month plans and number portability make it easy to change providers. Every week the industry handles almost 10,000 porting events."

A sector analysis should consider the stated objectives of the proposed designation, the characteristics of competition in the sector, what existing consumer protections, data access and sharing mechanisms are in place, and whether there would be net benefits to designating a sector, the submission argues.

The TCF noted that the Australian government has reversed its decision to bring telecom into the nation's own CDR regime because it was not able to adequately estimate the value of the benefits. This decision will be reevaluated at the end of the year.

COMPLIANCE COSTS: The TCF has also raised concerns about the potential high costs associated with compliance with a CDR regime.

In 2021, the Australian Treasury estimated that implementing a CDR for the Aus-

tralian telecom industry would cost around \$4.3 million in build costs and \$1.28 million in annual running costs for large companies, and \$340,000 in build costs and \$160,000 in annual costs for smaller providers. The TCF said this is likely to be a significant underestimate, as implementation costs for the banking sector have far exceeded forecasts, reaching up to \$100 million for bigger organisations.

“[In New Zealand,] CDR costs are likely to lead to price increases and could push smaller players out of the market and reduce competition,” the submission states. “A number of existing smaller operators would struggle or be unable to continue to operate, reducing competition and consumer choice. Larger telcos have hundreds of systems that would require costly changes in order to enable the use of APIs envisaged.”

Negative competition impacts are already being seen in Australia under its CDR regime, the submission argues, with mid and low tier banks incurring disproportionately higher compliance costs compared to major banks.

OTHER CONCERNS: The TCF is also advocating that the proposed legislation be modified to allow for a phased and gradual implementation of the CDR, ensuring there is sufficient time for designated sectors to comply. The legislation should also include a build-in statutory review, the submission argues, and the committee should carefully evaluate the privacy risks associated with introducing a CDR regime.

Meanwhile the CDR regime should include safe harbour and liability cap provisions, robust safeguards for accreditation of data brokers, and an expanded ability for data holders to refuse to release data in additional circumstances, the TCF said. Such circumstances could include cases where the data holder reasonably believes the disclosure would be used to facilitate fraud.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

DIGICEL PACIFIC UPGRADES MYCASH APP

Telstra’s Digicel Pacific has announced what it described as “game-changing upgrade” to its MyCash app, which provides access to a suite of financial services including utility bill payments, money remittance and support for deposits and withdrawals through a network of agents. The upgrade includes additional security measures such as biometric-based log-in and improved user experience. Digicel Pacific regional hub markets CEO Shally Jannif said: “We are thrilled to introduce the upgraded MyCash app, which represents a major milestone in our commitment to providing innovative digital financial solutions to our customers in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu. Your money, your way. The MyCash app is faster and packed with features that put you in complete control of your money. Experience the future of finance today.”

DISCOVERY GRANTED IN OAC BREAK CASE

A Federal Court judge has granted legal discovery for a wide range of documents belonging to both Subcom and Nartay Marine as part of proceedings brought by the sub-cable builder. Subcom has accused a ship, the Maersk Surabaya, that was at the time operated by Nartay Marine, of damaging the Oman-Australia Cable in 2021. Subcom was the construction partner for the OAC. The documents that Subcom will get access to include the Maersk Surabaya’s voyage data recorder, its voyage plan, the safety management system, master’s daily reports and documents provided to or received

from the Australian Federal Police. An AFP criminal case against the Nartay Marine was dropped.

SINGTEL DELIVERS 100% 5G COVERAGE IN SG MRT

Singtel said it is the first and only operator in Singapore to deliver 100% 5G coverage inside the island's Mass Rapid Transit system. Singtel's network now covers 6 underground lines, including 27 stations of a newly completed Thomson-East Coast Line. The work was carried out by a "specialised team" of engineers, who reconfigured existing hardware to deliver 5G signals, thus lowering the operator's overall environmental impact.

VERIZON BUYS FRONTIER FOR US\$20BN

Verizon said it has reached an agreement to buy Frontier Communications for US\$20 billion, adding 2.2 million fibre subscribers as well as expanding its network reach to 25 million premises across 31 states and Washington, D.C.

HUAWEI TEASES 3-FOLD PHONE

Huawei has teased a new smartphone with 3 panels that fold together along 2 edges. The model, Mate XT, was shown briefly in a promotion ad clip that showed the model resembling a standard smartphone when closed but with a widescreen display, rumoured to be 10 inches, when fully opened.

STT GDC COMMITS US\$3.2BN TO BUILD 550MW IN INDIA

ST Telemedia Global Data Centres announced a US\$3.2 billion investment plan to expand its data centre capacity in India by 550 megawatts. The figure will nearly triple the company's IT load capacity in the country and support the government's Digital India program.

CHINA'S GEESPACE COMPLETES FIRST HALF OF PHASE ONE NETWORK

China low earth orbit constellation builder GeeSpace has launched another set of 10 satellites, bringing its in-orbit network to 30 nodes, just under half of 72 satellites planned for Phase One of its program. According to the firm, the new satellites now lets the network, dubbed Geely Future Mobility Constellation, to deliver 90% coverage of the world, marking "the first time a Chinese commercial aerospace company has offered LEO satellite communications on a global scale."

EXA BUYS BULGARIAN FIBRE NET

Exa Infrastructure said it has purchased Global Communications Net AD, a Bulgarian telecommunications company with its own 2,500-kilometre fibre network. "This acquisition marks a significant expansion of EXA Infrastructure's strategic assets in South-Eastern Europe," Exa said. "With the addition of GCN's network, EXA Infrastructure will expand its extensive footprint into the strategically important region of South-Eastern Europe, providing key access to international interconnection points in Turkey, Greece, Romania, North Macedonia, Serbia and Georgia."

10 YEARS AGO IN COMMSDAY

Communications minister Malcolm Turnbull has revealed that the federal government will shortly release a wide-ranging innovation statement in its bid to cement Australia as a global location of choice for advanced ICT research and development and commercialisation. The document will see the government attempting to create an environment where innovation can thrive, including a strategy to address current employee scheme share arrangements and their effect on startups, as previously flagged by the minister.

iiNet has acquired a 60% interest in the Tech2 Group, a provider of technical services to both residential and business customers. The two groups plan to partner on customer service and home installations, particularly in the area of NBN services.

Cloud communication services provider Solgari has set up a regional office in Sydney to support its growing customer base across Asia Pacific. The Irish company was part of the just-completed Enterprise Ireland Trade and Investment Mission to Australia.

When it comes to broadband services that can satisfy the consumption habits of US homes, there is little competitive choice in the market place, according to US Federal Communications Commission chairman Tom Wheeler.

LATEST SHARE PRICES

Company name	Chg %	Last price	Change	Volume	Market cap
Pentanet Limited	+3.03%	0.0340	+0.0010	40,118	14.728M
Aussie Broadband Limited	+2.78%	3.7000	+0.1000	851,241	1.093B
Comms Group Limited	+6.85%	0.0780	+0.0050	754,834	30.142M
Chorus Limited	-0.24%	8.17	-0.02	472,315	3.545B
Field Solutions Holdings Limited	0.00%	0.0190	0.0000	52,631	14.695M
Global Data Centre Group	0.00%	3.5100	0.0000	287,932	271.228M
Hutchison Telecommunications (Australia) Limited	-9.09%	0.0300	-0.0030	15,684	407.175M
Macquarie Technology Group Limited	+0.01%	76.51	+0.01	72,458	1.972B
Megaport Limited	-0.26%	7.65	-0.02	1,346M	1.225B
NEXTDC Limited	+1.21%	17.63	+0.21	3,474M	10.602B
Superloop Limited	-1.43%	1.7250	-0.0250	568,308	864.984M
Spark New Zealand Limited	-0.91%	3.2600	-0.0300	1,357M	5.914B
Swoop Holdings Limited	-2.22%	0.2200	-0.0050	186,091	45.806M
Telstra Group Limited	+0.51%	3.9300	+0.0200	19,42M	45.409B
TPG Telecom Limited	+0.40%	4.9900	+0.0200	604,332	9.278B

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