NBN: Kevin Russell confirmed as permanent chair, Estimate recap

COMMS DEPT: Challenges spend reduction report

UNITI: Questions industry compliance with RBS

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COMMUNICATIONS DAY

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Federal government seeks feedback on 100Mbps SIP minimum speed proposal

FIRST

The federal government has launched a consultation on increasing the minimum regulated broadband speed under the Statutory Infrastructure Provider regime, with a proposed shift from the current 25Mbps to a new baseline of 100Mbps.

The SIP regime, established under the Telecommunications Act, obliges designated providers to supply broadband services to premises on request. While NBN Co is the default SIP for most of the country, other carriers are recognised as SIPs in areas where they deploy fixed access infrastructure.

According to the government, most SIP networks already support or are on track to support 100Mbps download speeds, rendering the current legislated minimum obsolete. The new proposal aims to bring the SIP rules in line with network capabilities and international benchmarks, while supporting "equitable access to digital services and enabling productivity growth."

Michelle Rowland

Communications minister Michelle Rowland said the move would help ensure the regime remains relevant as broadband becomes more essential to daily life and the economy. "The Statutory Infrastructure Provider regime plays an important role in this, but reform is needed to ensure legislation keeps pace with rapidly evolving technology and changing consumer needs," she said.

Submissions are being sought from both industry and consumers on issues such as the capability of SIP networks, upgrade timelines and appropriate transition windows to raise the mandated baseline to 100Mbps. The feedback process also builds on the findings of the 2024 Regional Telecommunications Review, which recommended modernising universal service arrangements to reflect growing demand for faster broadband in regional areas.

The government has set a submission deadline of 18 May 2025, and is accepting responses via its infrastructure department website.

The government is also considering new resilience requirements for SIPs, with the Department of Infrastructure examining whether all SIP service areas should be connected to at least two backhaul links. The aim is to reduce the risk of extended service outages by ensuring redundancy in the event of damage or maintenance on a single link.

Top speakers at this year's Summit. More to be announced over coming weeks

Optus CEO
Stephen Rue

NBN Co CEO
Ellie Sweeney

Soda founder
Bevan Slattery

TPG Telecom CEO
Inaki Berroeta

Aussie BB CEO
Brian Maher (TBC)

ACCC commissioner
Anna Brakey

ACMA chair
Nerida O'Loughlin

AMTA CEO
Louise Hyland

Comms Alliance
CEO Luke Coleman

AWS head of
telco Nathan Hill

Analyst Mohammad
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According to the Department, a second backhaul connection would generally be able to maintain service continuity during disruptions.

A consultation paper and draft instrument outlining the proposed backhaul requirement will be published shortly.

While NBN Co is by far the largest SIP, there are some 34 other telcos listed as SIPs—mainly in discrete locations where they provide services to estates or large apartment blocks. These SIPs include: Advatel Wireless, Applied IT Systems, ASN Telecom, Australian Communications Group, CipherTel, CNTCorp, CommsCo, CommSol Holdings, Core Fibre Networks, DGTek, Fiber Asset Management, Fiboss, Frontier Networks, Gtelecom, Interphone, LBN Co, Legion Securities, Lynham Networks, MyPort, Net360 (formerly Sensia), Netbay Free WiFi, OMNIconnect, OPENetworks, OptiComm, PIPE Networks, Prospecta Utilities, Real World Networks, Reddenet, Swoop Infrastructure, Taipan Networx, Transact Capital Communications, Vine Networks and VostroNet.

Grahame Lynch

Kevin Russell confirmed as NBN chair, as execs face Estimates

The federal government has confirmed the appointment of Kevin Russell as chair of the NBN Co board, effective from April 1. News of the appointment came as NBN executives faced one last Senate Estimates appearance before an expected federal election in May.

Russell has been acting in the role since January following the departure of Kate McKenzie and was originally appointed as a non-executive director in April 2024.

Kevin Russell

Russell brings more than 25 years of telecommunications experience to the position, including senior roles at Vocus, Telstra and Optus, as well as CEO roles with Hutchison Three UK, Hutchison Telecom Australia and Collinear Networks. His appointment was endorsed by communications minister Michelle Rowland and finance minister Katy Gallagher, who said Russell would "continue to provide strong leadership whilst maintaining stability and continuity for the board."

Meanwhile, NBN Co CEO Ellie Sweeney used her opening statement to Senate Estimates last night to report that the company remained on track financially and operationally. She cited the successful issuance of a $750 million domestic green bond in March, bringing total green bond funding to $7.4 billion.

Sweeney emphasised that fibre had now become the prevalent fixed-line technology on the network, describing it as "the most efficient network to operate" and "the most resilient technology to weather."

Sweeney and senior executives were questioned at length about NBN Co's response to ex-Tropical Cyclone Alfred, which resulted in outages across 378,000 services and impacted 2,269 network sites. NBN Co deployed 43 generators, primarily supporting fixed wireless towers, and activated 79 Disaster Satellite Services.

The company also announced a $7 million relief fund for affected customers via their retail providers. Chief customer officer Anna Perrin said the fund operated on a flat-rate basis: "It's a $50 amount for each service," she said, with retailers able to submit claims for impacted customers by the end of March.

Perrin confirmed that the fund would apply to customers who lost service for more

NBN Co at Senate Estimates last night

than 24 hours and met eligibility conditions based on location and outage duration. Sweeney said this was only the third time NBN Co had deployed such a relief package, following the 2020 bushfires and the 2022 Lismore floods.

When asked why a similar fund was not offered following North Queensland's earlier monsoonal flooding, Sweeney said the scale and impact of Alfred was considerably larger, and noted that NBN management made the final decision to trigger the fund.

KUIPER LEAK: NBN Co executives also faced pointed questions regarding media reports which claimed that Amazon's Project Kuiper was poised to beat Starlink to a low Earth orbit satellite deal with the company. The coverage prompted scrutiny of potential information leaks from within NBN Co.

Senator Ross Cadell asked: "Any ideas how a story got out or leaked or have we traced any information from your organisation on that?"

Sweeney replied: "Senator, maybe a couple of things from me. Let me say I really can't comment on speculation from a journalist and definitely I would politely put that back to the journalist in question around their source."

However, she added that "NBN takes our procurement policy, our probity and our due diligence very seriously," describing the procurement process as "complex," "delicate," and "commercially sensitive."

Pressed further by Senator Cadell on whether internal communications had been reviewed, chief development officer Gavin Williams said: "The premise of the question is that it's a leak of something. Point of fact, it was ultimately press speculation."

Asked if any internal checks had been conducted, Sweeney said she would "have to take that on notice."

When asked if a provider had yet been selected, Williams said: "We are well advanced in that process but at a critical stage in a very complex range of negotiations… there's no deal to be done until a deal's ready to be done."

He confirmed that the department and the minister's office had been "engaged and appraised of updates" throughout the process, but declined to confirm whether the minister had been advised of a preferred proponent.

Discussion turned to the economics of the final 622,000 premises full fibre upgrades. CFO Philip Knox confirmed that the connection cost—or lead-in - beyond the street build would be funded from NBN Co's own cashflows over five years, acknowledging a short-term increase in cash burn. He said the average cost of lead-ins to date had been $1500. This prompted Cadell to remark that NBN Co would have to find an additional $933 million on top of the announced $3.8 billion investment to fund those connections.

Sweeney defended the investment on both commercial and social grounds, stating: "Without this investment, we would not have had an upgrade path for those homes and businesses within that fixed line footprint."

She said the upgrade would enable services that are "more durable and reliable," while reducing operational costs and supporting environmental sustainability.

Grahame Lynch

Officials defend regional comms spend, cite "inaccurate reporting"

Federal communication departmental officials have defended the government's regional telecommunications funding profile in Senate Estimates, arguing that apparent cuts reflect technical rephasing rather than any reduction in overall commitment.

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts deputy secretary James Chisholm told Nationals senator Ross Cadell that "funding for the mobile black spot program has not disappeared" and claimed there had been "some misunderstanding in that respect."

Senate Estimates last night

"There has been no reduction in funding and no change in the overall allocation of the Better Connectivity Plan," he said. "We will step through that very carefully with you, but I think it's probably been made a bit confusing by some reporting that is not accurate."

Although Chisholm did not name the reporting in question, his remarks appeared to refer to CommsDay's coverage on Wednesday highlighting that headline regional comms funding is set to fall significantly in the 2025–26 financial year from the current year.

Total FY26 funding across five major regional communications initiatives—Better Connectivity Plan, Mobile Black Spot Program, Regional Connectivity Program, Peri-Urban Program and STAND—has been budgeted at $164 million. This is down 49% from an estimated actual spend of $319 million in FY25, itself $7 million below the originally budgeted $328 million.

Moreover, the $164 million FY26 figure is also substantially lower than the $221 million forecast for FY26 in last year's forward estimates—effectively a 26% cut on expectations set just ten months ago.

📊 Comparison of FY2024–25 Estimated Actual vs FY2025–26 Budget

Program	FY25 (Estimated actual)	FY26 (Budget)	Change
Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia	$210.1m	$111.3m	–47%
Mobile Black Spot Program	$54.8m	$15.6m	–72%
Peri-Urban Mobile Program	$10.6m	$13.2m	+24%
Regional Connectivity	$35.2m	$13.5m	–62%
Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters	$8.7m	$10.3m	+19%
➡️ **Total**	**$319.3m**	**$163.8m**	**–49%**

📊 Comparison of 2025–26 Forward Estimates and Budget

Program	FY26 (Last May's forward estimates)	FY26 (Updated budget estimates)	Change
Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia	$171.3m	$111.3m	–35%
Mobile Black Spot Program	$26.5m	$15.6m	–41%
Peri-Urban Mobile Program	$22.8m	$13.2m	–42%
Regional Connectivity	*Not listed*	$13.5m	New
Strengthening Telecommunications Against Natural Disasters	*Not listed*	$10.3m	New
➡️ **Total**	**$220.6m**	**$163.8m**	**–26%**

Officials insisted that funding for the Better Connectivity Plan remains fully allocated and said variations in budget lines reflect the phasing of contracted milestones. "You recall that $656 million was announced for a range of programs under that banner of the Better Connectivity Plan," first assistant secretary Sam Grunhard said. "I can assure you all of that funding remains available and is allocated to regional connectivity."

"It's standard practice that we would phase the funding to make sure it matches the milestones where we've contracted delivery with the grantees," Grunhard said. "It's a complex process… so you do see us making adjustments at each budget as is standard practice just to match those contracted milestones. But all the funding remains there."

Grunhard explained that the $501.4 million total "visible in the budget papers under the Better Connectivity Plan line does not account for three components: $72 million expended across FY23 and FY24, $17 million now profiled for FY30, and $74.8 million transferred to other portfolios."

Of that, $50 million has been reallocated to Treasury for payments to the states and territories under the Regional Roads Australia mobile coverage program, he said.

Despite these clarifications, CommsDay notes that none of these details were disclosed in budget paper commentary or footnotes, with the public-facing budget simply showing a context-free decline in both year-on-year annual spend and forward estimates.

Further more, the new profile also deviates from the original BCP structure, which promised $656 million over five years from FY23 to FY27.

Original forward estimates at the time of the plan's announcement posited four years of BCP spending as follows: $29.428 million in FY23, $190.018 million in FY24, $198.018 million in FY25 and $129.718 million in FY26, totalling $547.182 million and leaving roughly $109 million for FY27. The FY24 forward estimates later listed $108.818 million for FY27, reconciling the entire $656m amount over five years.

📊 **Better Connectivity Plan: Forecast vs Updated Spend and Forecast**

Financial Year	BCP forecast at announcement	BCP updated actual spend/revised forecast	Change
FY23	$29.4m	$6.0m	–80%
FY24	$190.0m	$101.8m	–46%
FY25	$198.0m	$210.1m	+6%
FY26	$129.7m	$111.3m	–14%
FY27	$108.8m	$81.1m	–25%
FY28	–	$46.3m	
FY29	–	$52.7m	
FY30	–	$17.0m	
➡ **Total**	**$656.0m**	**$626.3m**	–5%

BCP updated spend to FY25 based on actual spend nos from ensuing budget papers + does not reconcile $74.8 million stated as moved to other portfolios

However, based on the current budget data, actual or estimated BCP spend to date has been materially lower: $6 million in FY23, $101.803 million in FY24, $210.058 million in FY25 and $111.311 million in FY26, for a total of $429.172 million.

The latest forward estimates now project $81.097 million for FY27, $46.298 million in FY28 and $52.655 million in FY29—implying that the five-year program has effectively been extended over a seven-year timeframe, or accepting Grunhard's comment about undisclosed FY30 spend, eight years.

Grahame Lynch

Uniti questions levy compliance by rival telcos under regional broadband scheme

Uniti Group has questioned whether other telcos are fully meeting their obligations under the Regional Broadband Scheme, arguing that contributions to date fall well short of what should be expected given the size of non-NBN infrastructure footprints.

In a submission to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission late last year, and in subsequent private lobbying, Uniti raised concerns other major telcos may be underreporting 'chargeable lines' and avoiding payments under the $8 monthly RBS levy, which funds NBN Co's fixed wireless and satellite services.

Uniti owns greenfield competitor Opticomm and is currently the largest private contributor to the scheme. It estimates that just $25 million was collected from non-NBN providers in FY23—suggesting approximately 250,000 chargeable services, based on the $8 per line per month levy. However, Uniti believes that its own network and TPG's Vision Network, which is known to pay RBS levies, account for all of those services, implying other operators may not be contributing as required.

A key contention is the definition of a chargeable line. Uniti argues that the scope is broader than commonly understood, extending beyond residential and small business lines to include dedicated business services such as NBN Co's own Enterprise Ethernet and any line capable of delivering 25Mbps or more, including backhaul. CommsDay's reading of the relevant legislation—Part 3 of the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act—suggests that this is the case and any broadband line connected to premises is a chargeable line. Indeed, while there are exemptions for the first 25,000 residential and small business lines and the first 55,000 greenfield lines—there are no stated exemptions or exclusions for dedicated business fibre or other broadband connections.

"Since commencement of reporting and management by ACMA, carriers have either innocently or intentionally formed the view the RBS levy is only applicable to residential and small business as originally intended, not as ultimately legislated," Uniti said in its ACCC submission. It added that it believed ACMA has accepted carrier reporting based on assumed rather than legislated definitions.

Sources close to Uniti point to tens of thousands of business-grade connections operated by larger telcos as potentially chargeable under the legislation but apparently omitted from reporting.

ACMA does not publish detailed data on who pays what into the scheme, unlike similar schemes such as the Telecommunications Industry Levy, which helps pay for Telstra's universal service obligation.

The Uniti claims come as the ACCC consults on a revised pricing methodology that could see the levy fall to $4 per month under a forward-looking cost model. The government is also still considering the Department's consultation and summary papers on "better delivery of universal services" and "funding of universal telecommunications services (RBS review)."

NBN Co pays 97% of the levy itself, via offset certificates. But the levy helps create a price floor that prevents other participants in the scheme from cherry-picking NBN Co's national averaged pricing.

ACMA was contacted for comment.

Grahame Lynch

Fitch retains AA+ rating for NBN

Fitch Ratings has affirmed NBN Co's long-term Issuer default rating at AA+, with a stable outlook, based on the government's strong incentive to support the company, while the telco itself has retained its 'bb' standalone credit profile.

Fitch said the AA+ rating, which it upgraded from AA in February 2024, reflected the telco's relationship with the Australian government and was one notch below its Australian sovereign rating of AAA/Stable. The ratings agency said the assessment reflected the government's "very strong" responsibility to support NBN Co.

"The government has full control of the entity, has provided consistent support and has a considerable incentive to support the company in the event of distress, given the role NBN Co's infrastructure plays in providing critical services and maintaining Australia's global competitiveness," Fitch said.

The standalone credit profile reflected "reflects NBN Co's strong market position as the owner and operator of Australia's national broadband network, balanced against the company's high leverage."

However, Fitch said it expects "EBITDA net leverage to improve to 7.8x by FYE28, from 10.4x at FYE24, as the company benefits from rising ARPU, network maintenance efficiency improvements and a cessation of subscriber costs."

"This is slightly slower than our previous forecasts, following the increase in committed capex to deliver government-mandated network improvements," it said. "We are likely to assess the SCP as investment grade when we can anticipate EBITDA net leverage falling sustainably below 6.0x."

In its assessment released in early 2024 Fitch said that expected "EBITDA net leverage to improve to 7.8x by FY27, from 11.2x in FY23".

The overall AA+ rating was based on the government's ownership and control of the company, its incentives to support the telco, and precedents of support including repeated equity injections.

Fitch noted that the 2023 variation to the telco's Special Access Undertaking cut its initial cost recovery account to $12.5 billion. "This will enable NBN Co to set lower wholesale prices than if it were seeking to recover all costs associated with building the network," it said.

The agency also noted that NBN Co benefited from being Australia's dominant wholesale broadband provider. It expects revenue to be driven by increased ARPUs with existing end users upgrading their connections.

"This will be boosted by NBN Co's planned capital investment to improve connectivity and speed by expanding FTTP and upgrading the HFC network as part of the government's commitment to improve speeds across up to 95% of the fixed-line network and improving fixed wireless connectivity in regional areas," it said.

It expects revenue of $6.9 billion by FY28, with an EBITDA margin, including lease expense, of around 52.5%. "Furthermore, the continued growth of its wholesale business revenue segment should boost customer numbers and raise ARPU," it added. Its assumptions include capex of $12.8 billion over FY25-FY28.

NBN Co doesn't release public medium- or long-term financial forecasts.

As of June last year the company had raised more than $33.2 billion from debt capital markets and bank facilities (including short-term promissory note issuances), with some $6.5 billion of that during FY24, according to figures included in its most recent corporate plan.

During FY24 it raised $850 million from a Green Australian Medium Term Note issuance, the equivalent of A$2.0 billion in the US144A market, the equivalent of A$2.2 billion of Green Bonds in the European market, and private placements equivalent to A$434 million. NBN Co also issued a further $1.2 billion in short-term promissory notes during FY24.

Rohan Pearce

Partner Wholesale Networks, Entrust ICT launch voice start-up venture

Victoria-based voice, data, cloud and unified communications wholesale service provider Partner Wholesale Networks has launched a new start-up company in collaboration with fellow wholesaler Entrust ICT.

The new venture, Voice Pilot, will provide wholesale global Unified-Communications-as-a-Service (UCaaS), cloudCX, AI, messaging, analytics and security products. This will include the company's Cradle unified communications and collaboration platform.

Voice Pilot will work closely with Dubber, which is providing the company with its AI recording platform as well as integration into its list of UCaaS vendors. In total the venture will have a reseller base of over 150 partners, supported by 30 staff based in Melbourne and 20 staff in Manila.

Voice Pilot co-founder and CEO Graeme Kelly said the company is proud of its venture with Entrust ICT. "We complement each other brilliantly, PWN with its long history with telecommunications sales and marketing success, Entrust ICT with it's strong engineering skills and infrastructure network. We see a bright future in providing wholesale AI Comms and Cloudcx solutions to our sales partnering community," he said.

"We are already signing new services and currently in discussions with several other global UCaaS providers and cloudCX vendors to partner with Voice Pilot. We have exciting news pending on a new sales partner that will be selling services into the European and American markets."

Dylan Bushell-Embling

ITU expresses "grave concern" over RNSS jamming in joint statement

United Nations telecom, aviation and maritime agencies have made an unprecedented joint statement expressing "grave concern" over an increase in jamming and spoofing of navigation systems.

The joint statement from the International Telecommunication Union, the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the International Maritime Organisation urges UN member states to protect the global Radio Navigation Satellite Service from harmful interference.

The statement also calls on member states to reinforce resilience of the Global Navigation Satellite Systems that rely on the RNSS for navigation, positioning and timing, and to retain sufficient conventional navigation infrastructure as a contingency in the case of RNSS outages and misleading signals.

The agencies are meanwhile calling for states to develop mitigation techniques or loss of GNSS services. The statement also calls for increased collaboration between radio regulatory, civil aviation, maritime, defence and enforcement authorities on tackling navigation system jamming and spoofing.

Finally, the statement urges member states to report cases of harmful interference affecting RNSS to telecom, aeronautical and maritime authorities as well as the ITU Radiocommunications Bureau.

The statement builds on the ICAO Assembly Resolution A41-8/C, adopted during the 41st assembly of the organisation in October 2022. The resolution urges member states to ensure collaboration between aviation authorities, military authorities, service providers and spectrum enforcement authorities to protect global communication and navigation systems.

The resolution called on states to refrain from any form of jamming or spoofing affecting civil aviation, and to coordinate with air navigation service providers when military or security operations might affect civil aviation operations.

ICAO secretary general Juan Carlos Salazar said the organisation is committed to working with member states to implement protective measures via existing aviation safety frameworks and standards. “Radio Navigation Satellite Service interference can impact aircraft operations far beyond the immediate affected area, creating potential safety risks across multiple flight regions,” he said.

Under ITU radio regulations, member states are obliged to provide “absolute international protection” for frequencies used for the safety and regularity of flight. Stations are forbidden to carry out the transmission of superfluous, false or misleading signals. Meanwhile under the ITU constitution, member states are committed to take the steps required to “prevent the transmission or circulation of false or deceptive distress, urgency, safety or identification signals.”

Rohan Pearce

ComCom to review NZ’s fibre regulatory regime

The Commerce Commission is seeking views on a work program involving exploring the evolution of New Zealand’s regulatory regime for fibre services.

The regulator has published an open letter on a fibre input methodologies review, which must be completed by 13 October 2027 under a provision of the Telecommunications Act.

The letter stipulates that the commission’s initial view is that the existing fibre input methodologies are generally working well, so a comprehensive review of the regulatory regime is not required. The commission instead proposes to focus on the areas of highest value to end-users of fibre services.

One such issue is the weighted average cost of capital, used to help determine Chorus’ revenue limits for price-quality regulation, and for assessing profitability for all regulated wholesale fibre providers under the information disclosure regime.

The commission said its initial view is that its methodology for estimating the cost of capital, developed in 2010 under Part 4 of New Zealand’s Commerce Act, is fundamentally sound. Since the methodology was adopted, suppliers regulated under the act have raised significant capital and invested in the supply of regulated services, the letter states.

The review will therefore initially focus on elements including the regulator’s approach to the cost of debt, the risk-free rate of interest for equity, and the tax adjusted market risk premium. The commission then plans to review elements specific to fibre, including the asset beta, which is a measure of the sensitivity of the value of expected profits at a company to economy-wide shocks. Other fibre-specific elements include leverage and credit rating.

Another focus area will be the commission's approach under the capex input methodology to assessing proposed investments such as network expansion, to ensure fibre providers have the right incentives to explore opportunities to improve fibre coverage where commercially viable.

Meanwhile the commission plans to review whether the revenue cap imposed on Chorus under the fibre regime remains the most appropriate 'form of control' for Chorus' revenue, or whether alternative methods such as a price cap or hybrid approach should be recommended to the minister.

According to the letter, a pure revenue cap allocates all short-term demand risk to end-users, which may mean suppliers have weaker incentives to influence demand growth, such as through extending fibre services or making better use of the existing network by providing higher-value products to customers.

A CASE FOR DEREGULATION: Following a review of the input methodologies, the regulator plans to look at other aspects of the regime that are subject to review, including whether there is a case for winding back regulation of certain services. Other aspects under review will be whether there is a case for reviewing existing declared services or declaring an unbundled fibre service, and whether there is a case for targeted changes to information disclosure requirements.

The review will be conducted in two tranches, with the first phase mainly focusing on issues that will be relevant to the process for establishing the third Price Quality Path regulatory regime for Chorus. The commission aims to complete a draft decision for tranche one of the review in Q1 2026 and a final decision on Q3 of that year. The regulator aims to complete a tranche 2 draft decision in Q1 2027 and a final decision in October 2027.

Commerce Commissioner Tristan Gilbertson said the review is critical to ensure the regime remains well-calibrated and continues to encourage competition. "Maintaining the certainty required for ongoing investment in world-class fibre means having the right rules in place now and into the future, so we're launching a programme of work to ensure we keep the balance right," he said.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

NZ introduces consumer data right

NZ commerce and consumer commission minister Scott Simpson has said that the new consumer data right regime, introduced by the Customer and Product Data Bill which passed earlier this week, will initially apply to banking and electricity. However, in his announcement the minister also referenced a Commerce Commission study that "found that nearly a third of mobile and broadband users have not switched providers because it was simply too hard."

"The days of manually searching the internet for the best electricity plan, or painstakingly going line by line through months of bank statements when applying for a mortgage, could soon be over. Using your own data shouldn't be that difficult, and it won’t be in the future,” Simpson said after the bill was passed.

“This is a monumental step for Kiwi consumers. It sets up the framework to give them greater ownership of their data, and more power and ease when it comes to shopping around for the best deal on utilities and other essential services.

“It will also help grow New Zealand’s economy by breaking down the barriers for innovative technology companies, meaning they can also save time and money and offer new data-driven products and services.”

The Commerce Commission consumer satisfaction report released last week found that 31% of mobile consumers and 29% of broadband consumers had not switched providers because it required too much effort, even though doing so might mean they could get a better service for a better price.

During parliamentary debate Simpson noted that the bill itself provided an overarching framework for the consumer data right.

“The actual specific detail for individual sectors—the first will be banking, then we're going to go to electricity, and then there are a range of other sectors that we can consider along the way, but those specifics will come in secondary legislation provided by regulations,” he said. “Now, those will vary depending on the sector. That flexibility is important.”

“One of the aspects about New Zealand being relatively late to the game, in terms of this type of legislation, is that we can learn from aspects in other jurisdictions that haven't worked quite as well, and we can hopefully not replicate or repeat those errors, because we do want it to work appropriately here,” he told parliament.

Rohan Pearce

Ericsson trials W-band for mobile backhaul

Ericsson has launched a test of microwave backhaul for mobile sites using the W-band frequencies. The tests, conducted in collaboration with Drei Austria, are aimed at validating the feasibility of using W-band spectrum between 92GHz and 115GHz as wireless backhaul.

“By collecting accurate field data about rain, temperature and diverse indicators of the link, like receive signal level, modulation profile, we have been able to corroborate the prediction of the propagation models in 100GHz with the actual behaviour of the link under different weather conditions,” commented Drei head of transmission Wenceslao Garcia de Otazo. “After this viability confirmation we are confident about the usage of W-Band Microwave Links as a reliable and very high-capacity solution to connect our 4G/5G sites.”

According to Ericsson, the W-band represents a “new, free spectrum” that complements the traditional E-band for wireless backhaul. The addition of W-band will allow operators to expand transport network capacity, particularly in dense urban environments where spectrum congestion occurs, Ericsson added.

SOFTBANK PACT: Meanwhile, Ericsson signed a broad memorandum of understanding with SoftBank of Japan to collaborate on “NextWave Tech” out to 2030. The collaboration will span a range of new technologies that include artificial intelligence, Cloud RAN, extended reality and 6G. Among specific research areas are the integration of AI and sensing technologies into the RAN, efficient network designs for future use cases such as XR and the use of centimetre-wave technologies in 6G networks.

Tony Chan

Lynk's third Nasdaq listing deadline lapses with no future timeline

A 25 March deadline for Lynk Global to merge with a special purpose acquisition company for a Nasdaq listing has lapsed, putting this particular direction for the company's future in doubt.

Lynk Global had originally planned to emerge with SPAC Slam, but missed deadlines in August and December last year to complete the transaction. The delay resulted in the delisting of Slam on Nasdaq although its shares continued to trade in over-the-counter markets whilst it maintained its strategy to merge with Lynk.

However, Lynk Global has told media following the latest missed deadline that it now has no set timeline for a future listing. Meanwhile, Slam has reported a mass exit from its backers, with its investors redeeming more than 95% of their stakes in the venture.

In the meantime, Lynk appears to be raising financing on its own with a recent Series B funding round aiming to raise as much as US$215 million.

Significantly, Lynk has attracted major satellite operators, Intelsat and SES as investors and partners, with the latter forming an extensive partnerships with Lynk that includes a collaboration to redesign its network architecture to leverage multi-orbit backhauls, use of SES' ground infrastructure and a global distribution deal.

Lynk claims to have signed 50 mobile network operators to its service, which includes Telstra and TPG Telecom in Australia and 2degrees in New Zealand. In its signing with TPG in August, Lynk said it is looking to launch trial text messaging in Australia this year.

This week, Lynk announced the successful testing of SMS and voice calls on its network with Turkey's Turkcell.

Tony Chan

NOKIA EXPANDS APPS FOR BROADBAND DEVICES

Nokia said it has expanded the collection of applications on its Corteca Marketplace for broadband devices. This week, Nokia added Ookla speedtest, Device Anti-Theft asset security, WRFast gaming optimisation and two ad-blocking apps to the platform. The new applications complement existing applications, such as Nokia Fingerprint, Nokia Broadband Compliance, Netduma Optima, Nokia FastMile FWA Controller, F-Secure Sense, Gryphon Home, M-Lab Speed Test and OpenVPN Client, Nokia added. Through the Corteca platform, communications service providers will be able to manage these applications via the prpl lifecycle management and TR-369 standard-based protocols.

HFCL DEBUTS NEW “EKA” FIBRE

HFCL has unveiled a new type of optical fibre, promising “significantly low attenuation and macro bending performance.” The new single-mode fibre marketing under the Eka moniker is “made in India” and offers reduced optical losses and higher transmission capabilities over long distances. The new product surpasses the ITU-T G.657.A1 standard and is an ideal choice for telcos looking to enhance last-mile connectivity and support 5G rollouts, HFCL said.

WAVECONN’S ERIN BUYERS JOINS UDIA INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Waveconn general manager of brand, marketing and strategic partnerships Erin Buyers has been appointed to the National Infrastructure Committee of the Urban Development Institute of Australia. Buyers brings expertise in telecommunications and mobile infrastructure, positioning her to advise on connectivity requirements for property developments. Her appointment comes amid increasing cross-sector focus on digital infrastructure integration into urban planning, with Buyers expected to contribute perspectives on best practice and stakeholder engagement to improve connectivity outcomes across new communities and precincts.

5G NETWORKS PROMOTES LUKE MCGREGOR TO GROUP EXECUTIVE ROLE

5G Networks has promoted Luke McGregor to group executive for telco, networks and data centres. McGregor was previously head of wholesale and international and has also held senior roles at SUBCO and TPG. McGregor will oversee network strategy and delivery for enterprise and wholesale customers.

KRISTY KELLY DEPARTS TELCO TOGETHER FOUNDATION FOR AUTISM ROLE

Kristy Kelly has left her position as CEO of the Telco Together Foundation to take up a new role with Autism Spectrum Australia as autism friendly employment manager. Kelly, a former TPG and Vodafone executive, said the decision was driven by a rare opportunity to align personal experience with professional purpose. She thanked colleagues for their support over the past year and will now focus on improving employment pathways for autistic people, drawing on her background in leadership and inclusion.

NCS JV DEAL BOOSTS PHILIPPINES PRESENCE

Singtel-owned technology services firm NCS has announced a joint venture with Globe Telecom in the Philippines, with NCS to acquire a majority stake in Globe’s IT arm Yondu. NCS said that the JV would boost its Philippines workforce from 150 to more than 1200. “It also expedites the expansion of NCS’ Global Delivery Network, combining NCS’ delivery capability and capacity with Yondu’s resources and skills,” the company said. “In addition, NCS will bring in its global resources in digital, cloud, data and AI services to augment Yondu’s service offerings, which currently include Custom Software Development, eCommerce Solutions and Cloud platforms.” The new joint venture entity will be renamed NCS Philippines.

COMMPETE WELCOMES NUMBERING PLAN

Commpete said it welcomed a decision by the Australian Communication and Media to not prohibit the multiple service practice in the updated Numbering Plan and make mobile numbers available "for use for new, innovative and legitimate services that otherwise do not have a place in the plan." It noted that the national MNOs had lobbied to bar MSP. Commpete said it "believes that the amended plan strikes a careful balance, fostering innovation, competition, and choice for all end-users." However, it claimed that MNOs were continuing to "block and disrupt legitimate call traffic based on call traffic patterns." "This is an indiscriminate process that impacts businesses and consumers resulting in a lack of confidence that their calls will reach their intended destination without interruptions," it said, calling for ACMA and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to monitor the situation.

GOOGLE PREPS FOR WORK ON TABUA CABLE SYSTEM

Google subsidiary Starfish Infrastructure has been granted special temporary authority to construct and test portions of the planned Tabua cable system in US territory prior to a decision on its cable landing licence application. The cable system will link the US to Fiji and Australia, landing in NSW and Queensland. "The Tabua system is currently scheduled to be installed in US territorial waters as soon as April 18, 2025," Starfish said in its STA application. "A delay in the installation would impose substantial additional costs on Starfish and ultimately delay critical new transpacific connectivity. Starfish seeks STA now in order to ensure that construction, connection, and testing in U.S. territory may proceed on schedule. With this request, Starfish does not seek authority for commercial operation of the cable."

LEGAL AID GROUPS CALL FOR ACMA FOCUS ON MIS-SELLING

The Melbourne-based Consumer Action Law Centre and community legal service Westjustice said that the Australian Communications and Media Authority should more explicitly address "the issue of mis-selling by telco providers" in its compliance priorities. "This issue continues to present on our frontlines, with numerous people being sold products and services that they either do not need and/or cannot afford," the organisations said. The pair said that the proposed changes to the Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code "will do little to prevent the systemic harms created by incentivised mis-selling in the telecommunications sector… For these reasons, we continue to call on the ACMA to make it a top priority to investigate and take enforcement action against telco providers who engage in mis-selling."

AFP, ESAFETY SIGN NEW MOU

The Australian Federal Police and the eSafety Commissioner have signed an updated memorandum of understanding, replacing their 2020 MoU. In addition to improving information sharing and supporting collaboration, the MoU will enable eSafety to bring child abuse material to the attention of international organisations such as INTERPOL.

10 YEARS AGO IN COMMSDAY

Communications minister Malcolm Turnbull has marked the official launch of the new Digital Transformation Office via a Digital Innovation Forum in Sydney, with panellists ranging from Telstra COO Kate McKenzie to Salesforce.com EVP and ex-White House CIO Vivek Kundra.

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman has officially commenced internal consultation around a proposal to cut staff numbers and operating costs, as first reported by CommsDay.

Optus has entered into an enforceable undertaking with the Australian Privacy Commissioner over three separate security incidents that occurred last year. The incidents resulted in the compromising of personal information for over 100,000 individuals in each case.

LATEST SHARE PRICES

Company name	Change (%)	Last price	Change	Volume	Market cap
5G Networks Limited	0.00%	0.1450	0.0000	4,764	43.579M
Pentanet Limited	-3.23%	0.0300	-0.0010	19,000	13.428M
Aussie Broadband Limited	-0.49%	4.0800	-0.0200	891,850	1.212B
Comms Group Limited	0.00%	0.0500	0.0000	110,000	19.493M
Chorus Limited	-0.41%	7.26	-0.03	308,567	3.158B
Field Solutions Holdings Limited	0.00%	0.0220	0.0000	159,579	17.016M
Global Data Centre Group	0.00%	1.4250	0.0000	1.201M	110.114M
Hutchison Telecommunications (Australia) Limited	0.00%	0.0240	0.0000	1,033	325.74M
Macquarie Technology Group Limited	-4.40%	64.70	-2.98	48,386	1.744B
Megaport Limited	-3.13%	10.20	-0.33	601,826	1.64B
NEXTDC Limited	-6.46%	12.01	-0.83	2.6M	7.702B
Superloop Limited	0.00%	2.1800	0.0000	781,683	1.116B
Spark New Zealand Limited	-1.06%	1.8750	-0.0200	1.638M	3.469B
Swoop Holdings Limited	-3.85%	0.1250	-0.0050	230,382	27.678M
Telstra Group Limited	-0.24%	4.1400	-0.0100	21M	47.835B
TPG Telecom Limited	-0.41%	4.8300	-0.0200	1.111M	9.018B

About Communications Day (including Space & Satellite AU & The Line New Zealand)

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Mail: PO Box 490 Milsons Point NSW 1565
Website: www.commsday.com

Contacting CommsDay

Editorial director: Grahame Lynch: grahamelynch@commsdaymail.com
Managing editor: Rohan Pearce: rohan@commsdaymail.com
Editor at large: Tony Chan, tony@commsdaymail.com

CEO & Founder: Grahame Lynch
Grahamelynch@commsdaymail.com

Subscriptions and conference bookings:
Vicky Vo, vicky@commsdaymail.com
CommsDay Summit/Congress/Edisons sponsorship and co-ordination:
Veronica Kennedy-Good, veronica@mindsharecomms.com.au

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