Communications Market Study

# Communications products & services

Communication services are extremely important to me. I am very reliant upon them for work, and utilise them daily. Mobile and home internet are the most important varieties of communication service to me. I currently use a mobile phone, desktop computer and occasionally, a laptop. 4G mobile data and home ADSL2+ are used, although the ADSL2+ is insufficient to meet more than basic tasks (slow download speeds make anything more than browsing text-based internet resources difficult). My use of these services is likely to change in the future. I predict that I will move towards using internet-based phone calls rather than traditional processes, and use internet based messaging instead of SMS. I will probably send more emails, submit more reports, and organise more tasks using my phone while travelling than at present. Current communication services are not suitable because they inadequately meet my needs. I would like higher data caps (or if we want to be remotely comparable to the rest of the developed world, no data caps) and competitive pricing. The ACCC is likely well aware of the rate of customer dissatisfaction towards communication service providers – they are a frustrating and contemptuous industry. To be clear; the services offered are along the lines of what I seek, but the quality is abysmal.

# Choosing communications services & providers

It is very hard to choose an ISP effectively, as they seem very non-competitive. The differences between ISPs are not very clear, and all of them lack basic reliable service. The biggest problems I have encountered is unreliable connections, extremely slow speeds & poor customer relations. It is also very expensive – I do not feel that we are paying a reasonable price for the service we receive, but our options feel so extremely limited that I don’t see any other choice. When deciding what CSP to select, I prioritise connection type and data allowance. All I want is a reliable connection with a large allowance, nothing else really matters. Reputation does not factor in, because all of them are equally poor, coverage has never been adequate in my area, contracts are not a factor, because the only difference between companies are slight variations in the ratio of price to allowance. Performance is not a factor because all providers utilise the same outdated infrastructure anyway, so there is no variation.

To find information on potential service providers I use the websites of those service providers, and some third party listings of deals. The packages feel intentionally confusing, so I create a spreadsheet comparing price over allowance over connection type and try to work it out that way. It would be a lot easier if there were .gov websites dedicated to providing up-to-date information on the best and worst deals on the market, but I wouldn’t expect that much of a difference between the extremes. As previously mentioned, all ISPs offer incredibly similar services with little difference.

We have changed service providers a few times, but observed no differences. I do not think there is much incentive other than price to change again – service provided is identical. Switching is a laborious and lengthy task, with huge costs and a long switch time, it can take weeks to complete the transition. Our household is open to the possibility of making decisions for bundled or separate services, but as mentioned, when there is so little variance, what does it matter?

# Industry Developments

I have very low expectations of the National Broadband Network given the information I have been exposed to. I feel that even if my area gets NBN in the next decade or so, it will be subpar compared to inner-city Melbourne, let alone the rest of the developed world. The best I hope for is faster speeds, but no improvement on connection reliability. I feel that the NBN will be more expensive, because ISPs will market it as a new and exclusive high speed connection instead of what it really is – an attempt at bringing Australia’s internet speed up to a 2006. In two years (2013 to 2015) Australia dropped from 30th to 60th in average internet speeds globally. I am sceptical that the NBN will do much to reverse this trend.

# Final Comments

This is easily one of Australia’s most disappointing industries, and it has been for a long time. Our future as consumers feels bleak. Internet Service Providers are wholly inadequate considering our level of development. The NBN was, and still is, a poor execution of an infrastructure plan which would not have been sufficient to begin with. I am extremely interested in seeing Australia turn around on this matter. Thank you for taking the time to read my feedback.

**[Contact details redacted]**