

Optional services on **12 23** directory assistance number permitted

ACMA has amended the *Telecommunications Numbering Plan 1997* to allow additional services on the directory assistance number 12 23, including national and international operator-connected calls and other operator services.

While continuing to safeguard the traditional free directory assistance service for fixed telephone customers, the changes will mean telecommunications service providers can develop innovative value-added services for their customers.

The number 12 23 is a special services number presently specified in the Numbering Plan exclusively for directory assistance service. In addition, 12 23 is a 'shared number', which can be used by all carriage service providers to provide directory assistance services.

The new arrangements will allow service providers to also use this number to offer additional related services. It will be a commercial matter for them as to whether to

provide chargeable optional services on 12 23. Providers will be required to notify their customers about additional charges before optional services are offered.

Telstra has traditionally used the number to enable its customer base to receive directory assistance services, which are subject to price control arrangements set by government. As the only service provider currently subject to those pricing arrangements, Telstra will be required to submit an Implementation Operation Plan (IOP) for ACMA's approval to ensure that free directory assistance remains available to its customers, when additional optional services are offered on 12 23.

The IOP will require Telstra to consult with appropriate consumer groups before any optional services are offered. To assist Telstra in meeting its obligations, ACMA has prepared guidelines for the IOP that will also outline ACMA's policy for delivery of optional services on 12 23.

These guidelines include safeguards to preserve the integrity of the 12 23 free directory assistance service.

The Numbering Plan supports the government's commitment to directory assistance service by limiting charges for directory assistance on 12 23. The current policy on provision of directory assistance on 12 23 and the charging limitation on that service have not been altered by the variation. Any service offered in addition to directory assistance service is subject to a separate and distinct charge.

The variation to the Numbering Plan and guidelines are on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to For licensees & industry: Licensing & regulation > Telecommunications: Telecommunications regulation > Numbering & number portability > Numbering policy > Numbering Plan).

IPND Scheme to regulate access to customer information

A new ACMA scheme aims to ensure telecommunications customer information in the Integrated Public Number Database (IPND) data is only used for authorised purposes.

The *Telecommunications Integrated Public Number Database Scheme 2007* gives ACMA a 'gatekeeper' role in granting applications for authorisation to use and disclose information from the IPND. Authorisation may be given in connection with the publication and maintenance of a public number directory or for conducting research of a kind specified by the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts. The scheme

imposes conditions on the granting of authorisations, including obligations about how corrections are dealt with and the information that must be provided to consumers who are contacted by researchers.

The IPND is an industry-wide database of all listed and unlisted public telephone numbers established in 1998 and managed by Telstra under its licence conditions. Access to and use of data from the IPND is governed by the *Telecommunications Act 1997*, Telstra's licence conditions and the industry code *ACIF C555 – Integrated Public Number Database, Data Provider, Data User and IPND Manager*.

The IPND Scheme was established following recent amendments to the *Telecommunications Act 1997*. The amendments require ACMA to produce a legislative instrument to set up and administer the scheme, which details the process by which ACMA will grant authorisations to access the IPND.

The process includes provision for making applications, assessment of applications, the period for which authorisations will be in force, notification of decisions under the scheme, provision for imposition of conditions on the grant of authorisations and the process for when authorisations end. Distinct but

similar processes are in place for public number directory publishers and researchers.

ACMA will conduct information sessions for existing and prospective users to assist with applications under the IPND Scheme.

More information about the scheme is on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to For licensees & industry: Licensing & regulation > Telecommunications: Telecommunications regulation > Carrier licensing > Carrier & service provider requirements > Public Interest Obligation > Integrated Public Number Database (IPND) > IPND scheme).