

The telecommunications industry has undergone substantial growth and change since the Numbering Plan was enacted in 1997. Because of this very different telecommunications environment, ACMA is now reviewing whether the original objectives for shared numbers are still relevant, or will continue to be relevant over the next five to ten years.



ACMA seeks **public and industry comment** on the use and management of shared numbers

ACMA is undertaking a review of the numbers used by carriage service providers (CSPs) for directory assistance and operator services—shared numbers.

This review will be used to develop a set of principles for future development in the use of shared numbers. ACMA has commenced the review by releasing on its website a public discussion paper on shared numbers. The discussion paper sets out the background to the development of the Telecommunications Numbering Plan 1997 (the Numbering Plan) in 1997 and a range of relevant issues that industry and the public have raised with ACMA. Members of the public and the telecommunications industry are invited to submit comments.

Under the *Telecommunications Act 1997*, all CSPs are required to provide their customers with basic services such as directory assistance and operator services for faults and service difficulties. Shared numbers are telephone numbers that have been specified under the Numbering Plan to facilitate the provision of these services. The

numbers are used by all CSPs, so that they are 'shared' numbers rather than being allocated uniquely to one CSP. There are very few shared numbers—less than a dozen—compared to the hundreds of millions of numbers that have been planned and allocated by ACMA.

Shared numbers have two particular characteristics. First, they are short compared to other telephone numbers—usually only 4 or 5 digits. Short numbers were selected so that they would be easy for consumers to remember and dial. Second, shared numbers are common across all CSPs, so that consumers changing CSPs do not need to learn new numbers to access the specified service. For example, customers of any CSP can access directory assistance through the shared number 1223.

However, the telecommunications industry has undergone substantial growth and change since the Numbering Plan was enacted in 1997. For example, the number of carriers

has increased from three to 171. Similarly, the number of mobile phone services has grown to more than 22 million, or more than one phone service for every Australian. The number of active internet subscribers has surpassed seven million. Because of this very different telecommunications environment, ACMA is now reviewing whether the original objectives for shared numbers are still relevant, or will continue to be relevant over the next five to 10 years.

A copy of the discussion paper is available on the ACMA website www.acma.gov.au (go to About ACMA > News and media centre > Issues for comment). Submissions should be sent by **29 May 2009**, by email to regulatorydevelopment@acma.gov.au, or by post to:

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