

Numbering rules set to change to accommodate VoIP services

Growing consumer demand for new and innovative services including voice over internet protocol (VoIP) is driving the ACMA's recent decision to propose changes to numbering rules. The proposed amendments will improve flexibility in the Numbering Plan, which was developed at a time when services were delivered over the public switched telephone network. The technologies used to deliver telephone services today have changed considerably from that time.

Released for public comment in April, the ACMA discussion paper, *Geographic numbering amendments*, explains the two proposed changes to numbering rules and discusses their potential effect. The proposed amendments

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would remove limitations in the Numbering Plan on outbound only services (including VoIP) and provide a framework governing the use of geographic numbers when used for services outside their normal area.

'The current telecommunications numbering arrangements date from 1997 and earlier. They assumed services were delivered over the public switched telephone network. Since then, the number of carriage service providers has grown from a handful to hundreds. More fundamentally, the technologies used to deliver telephone services have changed considerably—including the rapidly increasing availability and use of VoIP services,' said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA.

'Our stakeholders have sought a number of changes to numbering arrangements to accommodate new services over the past 12 months. In responding to these concerns, the ACMA intends to examine a range of merging numbering issues over the course of 2010 that will help inform any new fundamental approach to the allocation of telephone numbers under the Numbering Plan and the regulation of numbering administrative arrangements,' said Mr Chapman. 'This discussion paper is a first step in that process.'

In seeking feedback on its proposals, the ACMA recognises the very significant value of providing predictability on the regulation and administration of the numbering resource. In addition, but equally, the ACMA considers it important that telephone service providers inform consumers about the potential differences and limitations on their services when consumers are issued with a telephone number that does not correspond with the physical location of the service. ☎

Submissions

The ACMA is seeking written submissions on the matters raised in this discussion paper both in response to specific questions raised and as otherwise considered relevant.

Submissions on the paper are due by **31 May 2010**.

Submissions should be sent via email to Numbering.Project@acma.gov.au or by mail to:

The Numbering Project
Australian Communications and
Media Authority
PO Box 13112
Law Courts
Melbourne Victoria 8010

The discussion paper and a draft variation to the Numbering Plan, together with information on the ACMA's role in providing the framework and policies for telephone number allocation, issue and use, are available on the ACMA website at www.acma.gov.au (go to About ACMA: News & media centre > Issues for comment > IFC 06/2010).

