



Australian Government



Australian
**Small Business and
Family Enterprise**
Ombudsman

14 May 2018

Network Migration Taskforce
Australian Communications and Media Authority

Email : NetworkMigration@acma.gov.au.

Dear Sir/Madam

NBN RULES: CONSUMER INFORMATION AND SERVICE CONTINUITY

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the above. The Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO) represents the concerns of small businesses and family enterprises in Australia.

We support simplification and increased functionality of consumer experience when negotiating with their carriage service provider (CSP) to migrate to the National Broadband Network (NBN). However, we consider that impacts on small-business consumers have not been clearly considered and the needs of medium enterprises disregarded. To ensure that all home based SMEs benefit from the proposed new rules it is imperative that their specific needs are identified in each rule.

For example, the customer information standard must require CSPs to provide information of best fit plans for a range of SME profiles, not just household usage profiles. Of particular importance is the different upload and download speeds. These are often misunderstood and are best explained by providing which is used for particular activities. For your reference we provide a placement, Appendix A, we recently released to explain, in plain English, the key jargon an SME needs to understand.

In the Standards the conditions that define a business at b(i) and (ii) are subjective and prohibitive. Who determines if an SME has had a 'genuine and reasonable opportunity to negotiate' the service contract, (b)(i)? The issues that the proposed rules seek to address, confusing bills, lack of consistency in plans and limited information on real speeds is the information vacuum that SMEs must negotiate in. ACMA should set the minimum information to be provided in a consistent manner by a CSPs to allow a SME to compare offerings and create 'a genuine and reasonable opportunity to negotiate'.

Condition (b)(ii) is prohibitive as SMEs that operate information technology, retail or other online businesses may reasonably spend more than \$20,000 annually. Basic day-to-day operations, such as marketing, customer service and payments will quickly amount \$20,000. It is crucial that SMEs are covered by the new rules to ensure service continuity and quality, particularly when they rely on such services in order to operate their businesses. Accordingly, we recommend that the annual cap be removed.

I trust these comments assist you. We would be happy to discuss any of these matters with you. Please feel free to contact Jill Lawrence, on 02 6263 1558 or at Jill.Lawrence@asbfeo.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

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National Broadband Network

Get ready

When the National Broadband Network (NBN) is rolled out in your area, most other network services will be disconnected after 18 months. To connect to the internet, you will need a new plan with a service provider, e.g. Telstra, Optus, iinet.

- Check to see when the NBN arrives to your area - nbnc.com.au
- Shop around to compare providers.
- Check the compatibility of any equipment you have, such as security devices and phone systems.

Choose the right plan

There is a difference between upload and download speeds. Do you need good download speeds for large graphics files? Or fast upload and download for videoconferencing?

- Check the upload and download speeds and consider your needs.
- Ask about the bandwidth (capacity) of the network - what is the maximum rate of download?
- Consider your provider's peak usage times - will this impact on the speed of your connection during your peak times?



Avoid slow connections



- Place your router and modem in the centre of your premises with a clear line of sight to your devices. Keep them away from fridges and microwaves as it may slow your connection.
- Update your hardware if it is more than five years old.
- Make sure your router can deal with the number of devices you need to connect.
- Schedule security and program updates for outside business hours.
- Make sure your plan is right for your needs.

Firming up the right solution ...

A local accounting firm was suffering from poor internet and upload speeds. When files needed to be uploaded, the service would slow and often drop out completely. The provider was continually unable to provide the speeds and connectivity that was promised. By better understanding their internet requirements, the firm was able to compare different plans and providers and find a solution that worked for them.

case study