5 November 2020

Dear Chris Ratchford,

At Aussie Broadband Limited, we believe that the program has produced worthwhile outcomes and has met its overall objectives. The program has provided more transparency within the industry and has allowed customers to make educated decisions on choosing products and RSP's.

Although Aussie Broadband believe that the Measuring Broadband Australia (MBA) program has produced worthwhile outcomes, the testing methodology should be reviewed. We believe that the testing methodology should be in line with the ACCC Broadband Speed Claims Industry Guidance to ensure integrity and reliability when it comes to the reporting of data for RSP's.

A negative and unintended outcome from Aussie Broadband's perspective relates to the underperforming services data. Aussie Broadband has existing customers that struggle to get the speeds that they sign up for. Some customers have been adamant to use their own hardware against our recommendations and advice. An issue with the underperforming service data, is that it does not consider the hardware that a customer uses, which could be outdated and cause significant speed issues with their service. On top of hardware limitations, some Aussie Broadband customers elect to choose a high speed tier even though they utilise VDSL technologies (FTTN/B). The reason behind this is that they choose the higher speed tier because they prefer this, rather than the next speed tier down. Aussie Broadband believes that the underperforming services should excluded from the ACCC headline number. This indicates a range of issues in relation to the integrity of the data that may be recorded throughout the program. In addition, the threshold for underperforming should be raised now that NBN have introduced their overprovisioning changes. We recommend any services that never achieve 90% of their headline speed are excluded.

Aussie Broadband firmly believes that extending the program to include fixed wireless services would not be beneficial moving forward. Due to the nature of the access technology, the results will vary considerably. The data collected would not be a valuable representation of an RSP's service and would be unreliable due to the sporadic nature of the connection type. This is the main reason why fixed wireless connections do not have a typical busy hour speed.

From Aussie Broadband's perspective, we would support the extension of the program to other networks that are utilised across the industry like Opticomm rather than an RSP's individual network. We currently provide services for NBN and Opticomm. By extending this program to other networks, consumers can evaluate how their service is performing. The program is designed to capture NBN which disadvantages those who are on a different network. To meet the objectives of transparency and educating consumers, the program should be extended to those networks. For this extension to the program, Aussie Broadband recommends that the issues related to the testing methodology should be fixed to ensure that the data collected on other networks is reliable and consistent.

The geographic split proposed could be valuable to detect deficiencies in areas. As a regional based RSP, Aussie Broadband believes that separating the two geographic regions will highlight any deficiencies or irregularities. This data is useful to RSP's, consumers and wholesalers like NBN who could identify key areas that need development.

The data collected from the program is accessible and useful to consumers, yet an issue is whether consumers know that it exists and how this can aid their decision-making process for an RSP. We see an opportunity for improvement where the ACCC can actively publish and report more frequently and directly with customers and consumers resulting in an increased awareness of the MBA data.
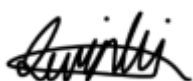
Comparator sites and intermediaries generally use the data from RSP's themselves. The data shown on these sites comes straight from the RSP's websites to compare NBN services. At Aussie Broadband, we do not expect that the program would be utilised by these sites as they build partnerships with the RSP's themselves, rather than relying on the MBA program. These sites and services should continue to work with RSP's to collect this information due to the testing methodology discrepancies between the ACCC guidance and the MBA program.

Aussie Broadband believes that the program does not meet the needs for small business. A specific panel of small business volunteers would assist in capturing data relevant to these organisations. The busy hour speed data is irrelevant to these organisations as it captures speeds during 7pm-11pm, the times in which most small businesses are generally closed with some exceptions, for example, hospitality organisations. Aussie Broadband believes that the separation of residential and small business data should be made to ensure that we capture busy hour speeds for residential customers (7pm-11pm) and typical busy speeds during standard work hours. To meet the objectives of the program, Aussie Broadband believes that assisting all customers to make informed decisions is important. The inclusion of small business data would assist in doing this.

Aussie Broadband would be willing to assist the program in regard to measuring the performance of business services. At Aussie Broadband, we are always willing to support the needs for our small and medium business customers and by assisting in this program. Not only is the data valuable for Aussie Broadband, but it is also important for our small and medium business customers who have not yet had the opportunity to volunteer for this program.

Moving forward, Aussie Broadband understands the value that the MBA program adds to the industry and consumers, but some changes are required. The testing methodology should be in line with the ACCC guidance to ensure consistency. Along with this, the MBA program should be considering the possibility of underperforming services due to outdated hardware. Once this is adjusted, Aussie Broadband would encourage the inclusion of other networks and small business volunteer data.

Warm regards,

Leigh Winter
Marketing Compliance Coordinator