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Domestic Mobile Roaming
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
Email: mobileroaminginquiry@acc.gov.au

DAFWA RESPONSE - DOMESTIC MOBILE ROAMING DECLARATION INQUIRY 2016 - DRAFT DECISION

DAFWA supports the draft decision of the ACCC to not declare a domestic mobile roaming service.

Agriculture is heralded as a significant growth sector in the WA economy in the post-mining boom era, however blanket digital coverage is the single biggest issue confronting the future success of WA farm businesses.

The uptake of digital technologies continues to be hamstrung by the lack of available digital communication infrastructure resulting in limited coverage, poor data speeds, poor back haul rates, unreliability and insufficient data allowances. As a result, continued technological advancement on-farm is limited at significant cost to the broader economy. Farm businesses increasingly find themselves in a data-rich environment without the means to easily collect, share and analyse the information being generated.

Access to fast, reliable digital infrastructure remains a vital precursor to building a thriving agriculture/AgTech sector in WA. This requires telecommunication companies to invest and to compete. A declaration of mobile roaming would have the potential for the following:

- Disincentive for the large telecommunication infrastructure providers to continue to invest into rural infrastructure and to provide ongoing maintenance.
- Coverage is the key way in which telecommunication service providers compete; roaming could remove coverage as a basis for competition.
- Loss of incentives for the host network to make further investments in maintaining, upgrading and extending their mobile networks.
- Reduced incentives for the roaming network to invest in and extend their own network, as they seek to rely on the ability to roam onto another networks.

Competition between telecommunications companies will encourage growth. Roaming potentially reduces the need for competition. The balance is to increase investment into infrastructure whilst at the same time promoting competition.


The consumer pricing impact resulting from the introduction of mobile roaming is unknown. It is unclear as to whether roaming will deliver lower or higher retail prices to consumers in the longer term.

Improvements have been made to the connectivity of rural communities, associated with initiatives such as the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN) and investment in the Mobile Blackspot Program. The WA Government, in partnership with the Commonwealth Government and telecommunication infrastructure providers, has invested substantially in regional telecommunications infrastructure and sees joint government and private investment continuing into the future. A large number of towers have been installed and there is no barrier preventing companies from installing their own infrastructure on the existing towers.

The success for any solution will be measured by network accessibility, reliability and appropriate backhaul rates.

For further information please contact Mr Paul Tzaikos, Director Digital Connectivity, Grains and Livestock Directorate at paul.tzaikos@agric.wa.gov.au

Yours sincerely



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