

Response to ACCC further consultation on Service Declarations descriptions (MTAS)

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(public version)

Symbio operates one of the largest IP Voice networks in Australia and is interconnected with all major mobile and fixed networks. It provides wholesale fixed voice and mobile virtual network operator (MVNO) services to its customers.

MTAS Voice

ACCC Current Definition

The domestic mobile terminating access service is an access service for the carriage of voice calls from a POI, or potential POI, to a B-Party directly connected to the access provider's digital mobile network.

ACCC Proposed Definition

The domestic mobile terminating access service is an access service for the carriage of voice calls and application-to-person SMS from a POI, or potential POI, to a B-Party assigned number from the digital mobile number ranges of the Australian Numbering Plan.

Symbio View

Symbio, as stated in its submission on the Draft Report, agrees with the ACCC's proposed definition as it applies to MTAS(Voice). We believe that this better supports the evolving use of mobile numbers by business customers, where calls are increasingly being originated and received by contact centre / CRM software rather than mobile devices with sim cards.

The concept of business mobile convergence, or stronger union of mobile numbers and UCaaS platforms has been tipped as a major trend by Omdia (2024 Trends to Watch: Unified Communications and Collaboration). Omdia survey data suggests that over 80% of the market is interested in business mobile convergence, and we anticipate many knowledge workers and service workers with UCaaS PSTN calling capability will migrate to business mobile calling. This strategic, unified approach is essential given the need to support a more mobile workforce and business continuity within modern business operations.

The drafted proposal to the MTAS definition will facilitate more competition in the wholesale market by allowing all network operators to offer these services, as opposed to Mobile Network Operators only. This will benefit end-users allowing them to have more choice in mobile services.

The new proposed ACCC definition for MTAS (Voice) is truly technology neutral and is aligned to this change in market dynamics.

It is recognised that there will be issues to be addressed when the ACCC considers pricing for the declared service MTAS service but these are not considered insurmountable and could be structured to prevent arbitrage. Even now, an MTAS call could terminate on a cellular network, WiFi via the fixed network or a voice mailbox – and in the future on a satellite network so this is a matter that needs to be addressed.

Optus Submission to the Draft Report re MTAS Voice

The Optus submission states that the existing definition is technology neutral which it is not, as it refers to “digital mobile network”.

Optus acknowledges the ACCC’s statement that “mobile network operators routinely carry calls to their end users via Wi-Fi networks.” This is also an acknowledgement that mobile phones are now much more sophisticated than in the early years of mobile calling and have additional features such as Wi-Fi calling that allows calls to be made via Wi-Fi into fixed network access services. As the mobile phone as a device has progressed, the definition associated with its use should also progress as proposed by the ACCC.

Optus states that the MTAS services should be between two carriers like all interconnection services. Symbio does not see the relevance of this statement and it is certainly not true of all interconnection services, e.g. Symbio is a CSP, not a carrier, and has no trouble selling and buying interconnection services.

Optus seems to see a problem with numbers being allocated by a separate entity (the ACMA) who is responsible for the Numbering Plan. Symbio does not see an issue here as it agrees, from past experience, that having a number allocated by the ACMA does not guarantee conditioning of the at number by other carriers to allow services to be provided. However, if the number allocation accords with a declared services definition this would alleviate this problem.

Symbio agrees that those CSP’s allocated mobile numbers would need to comply with the standard arrangements around mobile calling, e.g. portability, interception, IPND, etc.

Telstra Submission to the Draft Report re MTAS Voice

Telstra argues that if the proposed MTAS definition is adopted it would undermine the ACCC’s position not to combine declared FTAS and MTAS services and could cause regulatory instability and uncertainty. It is Symbio’s view that the ACCC is trying to align the current business and residential requirements for mobile numbers with an update

to the regulatory regime rather than leaving it back in the time of the initial introduction of mobile services. Regarding fixed network operators getting access to regulated MTAS rates, this will only occur if the service provided concurs with the regulated service definition. It should be noted that in terms of current regulated charge for MTAS calls, much has changed since the last ACCC pricing determination, including the increasing dominance of data services on 4G and 5G networks and the increasing use of Wi-Fi access. Hence, we would expect a significant review of MTAS pricing going forward regardless of the Service Definition.

Other Matters

Symbio reiterates its view on the following matters as covered in our previous submission:

MTAS service definition should not be amended to exclude incoming international voice calls to MTAS.

Scam reduction and blocking is best handled under the registered Scan Code. The Scan Code and the Use of Numbers Code are due for review by Communications Alliance later in 2024 and this is the best vehicle to address such matters. Industry players have been putting considerable effort into reduction of scam calls as part of this activity and this is ongoing as scammers continually adjust their mode of operation. It is also noted that the ACMA has commenced a review of the Numbering Plan and this will be ongoing during 2024.

Symbio looks forward to further discussing these matters with the ACCC at a convenient time once they have reviewed our response.

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