

# COMMUNICATIONS DAY

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## ACCC commissioner queries future of co-regulation, low-cost NBN plans

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has questioned co-regulation, with commissioner Anna Brakey stating that she is not confident the current review of the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code will result in a “positive outcome.” Speaking at the CommsDay Summit yesterday, Brakey also said she did not think that reforms suggested by Communications Alliance were adequate.

“Co-regulation under the industry-led Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code, combined with the framework’s two-step enforcement process and disproportionately low-level financial penalties provide very few incentives for industry compliance,” Brakey said.

“As such, the ACCC is not confident that the current Code review process will result in beneficial outcomes for consumers.”

Brakey noted that others shared the ACCC’s views. “The role of co-regulation has recently also been questioned by the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and by Australia’s peak telecommunication consumer representative body, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network,” Brakey observed.

“In fact, industry itself, via the Communications Alliance, has also suggested reforms that would make industry codes enforceable and not initially voluntary,” she added. “But we think that this alone does not adequately address the issues. The ACCC continues to support the exploration of other regulatory solutions to ensure consumers are protected from misconduct by telecommunications providers.”

Brakey also commented for the first time on NBN Co’s February proposal to increase the speeds of its Fast plans, led by an increase in bitrate for the 100Mbps plan to 500Mbps for the same wholesale cost.

“The ACCC has not yet formed a view on what, if any, changes NBN Co should seek to make in respect to this proposal. Instead, we will consider the feedback from in-



dustry to the [NBN product development forum] consultation paper before we form our view,” she said.

“I can say though, that we see a continuing role for a range of wholesale offers that support retail product differentiation,” she explained.

“This approach not only supports retail service providers to effectively compete by better targeting their offers to different household types, it also allows NBN Co and retail service providers to set efficient prices for households that place additional value on incrementally higher speeds,” she stated.

“Without this, we could anticipate consumers facing the risk of higher prices in the long term, as well as reduced choice in the market.”

Brakey also signalled an interest in low-cost entry plans.

“Recently, we have observed that some retailers have stopped marketing or increased the price of entry level plans for new customers. In some other cases the prices of entry level plans remains relatively high. This means a reduction in lower priced plan options for consumers,” she said.

“We would be concerned to see a reduction in product choice and competition for consumers that can be well supported by entry level offers, particularly given many consumers are facing budget constraints due to cost of living pressures.”

“In our view, reduced availability and affordability of these products would likely have significant implications for consumers and market efficiency more generally.”

She noted NBN Co’s intention to consult on the development of low-cost, flat-rate plans as CVC charges continue to be phased out. Wholesale product development of this type could potentially have an important role to play in supporting more affordable retail offers on the NBN network, she noted.

“We would also be open to considering other proposals to ensure there continues to be affordable options in the market, should this become necessary.”

Grahame Lynch

## **Minister says telcos, stakeholders must break down silos during outages**

Communications minister Michelle Rowland said that “breaking down the silos” is a key objective of the government’s response to the Bean report on the Optus November 8 outage, as she explained the intention of the proposed Triple Zero Custodian framework yesterday.

Delivering the closing keynote at the CommsDay Summit yesterday, Rowland said a key finding from Bean’s analysis was that within the Triple Zero eco-system, there is no specific entity that cuts across the various functions played by mobile carriers, the Emergency Call Person, emergency services operators and regulators to ensure the system operates optimally to protect public safety.



“Mr Bean noted all participants are well motivated and committed to improving

# Announcing the Edison Awards 2024 winners

The 2024 instalment of the Edison Awards, hosted as part of the CommsDay Annual Dinner, was held on 30 April at Sydney's Fullerton Hotel. We can now reveal who the winners were for nine award categories: with a record eight finalists in the mobile category and seven in the wholesale category.

## BEST MARKETING INITIATIVE

**WINNER:** Vocus for Starlink

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:** NBN Co for Scams Awareness Week  
Superloop for Lag Less campaign

**Tangerine** for innovation in marketing and partnerships

## BEST SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

**JOINT WINNER:** Telstra InfraCo for Energy Reduction

**JOINT WINNER:** NBN Co for its Sustainability Bond Initiative

**Cyent** for major telco decommissioning project

**Ericsson** for Breaking The Energy Curve

## BEST MOBILE PARTNERSHIP/INITIATIVE

**JOINT WINNER:** Ventia & Optus for Stadium Australia coverage

**JOINT WINNER:** Telstra & Ericsson for 5G network slicing

**Telstra** for its Mobile Gaming Optimiser

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:** TPG Telecom for Mobile Private Network

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Nokia for Digicel mobile network refresh

**More** for its CBA and Telstra partnership

**Nokia & Microsoft** for their 5G security solution

**Telstra** for its Ericsson Cloud RAN partnership

## BEST COMPETITIVE FIBRE ACCESS OPERATOR

**WINNER:** FibreconX

TPG Vision Network

Vocus

## BEST VNO

**WINNER:** More Telecom

## BEST FIXED BROADBAND RETAILER

**WINNER:** Superloop for its MyRepublic migration

Aussie Broadband

More

## BEST ENTERPRISE TELCO

**WINNER:** Vocus for metro-grade comms in remote and rural

Console Connect

TPG Telecom



## BEST WHOLESALE TELCO

**WINNER:** NBN Co for its SAU

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Superloop

**HIGHLY COMMENDED:** Telstra Wholesale

TPG Vision Network

Console Connect

FibreconX

Optus Wholesale

## BEST LONGHAUL NETWORK OPERATOR

**WINNER:** Vocus for Northern Australia

SUBCO

QCN

Optus/Nokia

## HALL OF FAME: Peter Shore

Peter has been involved in the Australian and International communications industry for more than 40 years, including:

| Senior roles in large organisations, such as OTC and Telstra, Arqiva and Cellnex in Europe

| Chairing smaller companies, such as Uecomm, Hostworks, Unwired and Lonely Planet

| Advisory roles to Siemens and Investec

| 12 years in Europe heading up Macquarie Bank's \$15bn of European telecom and media assets, particularly Arqiva and Airwave

| Serving for 8 years on the Board of Cellnex, Europe's largest independent telecoms infrastructure company, from pre-IPO to a \$50bn company.

| Returning to Australia before Covid to cofound and chair GigaComm, a high speed internet service provider.

**CommsDay CEO Grahame Lynch noted Peter's key role, when at OTC, in modernising Vietnam's network.**

"When Peter first arrived in Vietnam it had 2 international phone circuits switched via Moscow, connecting 4 million Vietnamese overseas who had left their home. A few years later, 3000 circuits were connected via Australia!"

the experience for consumers. But he found that each of the Triple Zero players, quote: 'stayed in their lane' to the point that the system is not as robust or effective as it could be," Rowland said. "It lacks the requisite tension across the participants that helps ensure the public interest is front and centre. Breaking down these silos is central to ensuring the system works when Australians need it most."

The proposed Triple Zero Custodian framework would have a key role in coordination and decision-making authority during crisis events.

"To support the creation of the Custodian, the Government will work with industry to form a steering committee to clarify its scope, functions and powers – to ensure the Custodian can actually work effectively across the system. Given its consumer focus and expertise in the industry eco-system, I believe the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman is uniquely placed to lead this committee," Rowland said.

The minister said she was open minded as to whether the "custodian function" that Bean has recommended could be undertaken by an existing entity, through collaboration between agencies or if a new authority ought to be established.

She emphasised that the outage demonstrated the need to elevate established protocols to ensure industry are more accountable and information flows better coordinated. Thus, she had directed the Australian Communications and Media Authority to develop mandates on information sharing, reporting and outage mitigation plans.

"Mandatory steps are needed because as Mr Bean found, the voluntary protocols were not followed. I expect the first of these enforceable standards and determinations to be in place as soon as is possible with my strong expectation that significant progress will be made this year," she said.

"There is an important role for self-reflection here across government, regulators and departments, too. The Australian Government and the ACMA will review all legislation and regulations relating to the Triple Zero service – with a public commitment to conclude the review over the next six months," she added.

Grahame Lynch

## **Gov't announces \$17.4m in grants to improve resilience of telco networks**

The federal government has allocated \$17.4 million in grant funding for 33 projects to improve the resiliency of telecommunications networks during natural disasters.

The government has selected the initial projects to be funded through the innovation round and power resilience round of the \$50 million Telecommunications Disaster Resilience Innovation program, which forms part of the \$1.1 billion Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia.

Projects slated to receive grant funding include the deployment of hybrid backup power solutions at nine sites across Queensland, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia.

The solutions will use combinations of renewable energy, fuel and batteries.

In addition, seven deployable telecommunications projects will be funded, including wide area Wi-Fi networks.

Other projects include the rollout of portable generators to support telecom resili-

ence nationwide, as well as pilots involving the use of satellite technologies for purposes including backup for terrestrial communications.

Applications under the program were assessed by the department.

The government is now seeking feedback from the department on how best to allocate the remaining funds to improve connectivity and resilience in regional, rural and remote areas.

The government has allocated \$30 million for the power resilience round and \$20 million for the innovation round of the program, and the 33 selected projects will receive \$11.3 million and \$6.1 million respectively from these funding pools. The innovation round is for the development of prospective technologies to improve the resiliency, redundancy and availability of telecommunications during or after a natural disaster.

Communications minister Michelle Rowland said the investments being made in the program will help save lives. “While no network is ever 100% disaster-proof, the Government is determined to do what we can to boost the resilience of our telecommunications networks when Australians need them most,” she said.

“The Telecommunications Disaster Resilience Innovation program is funding power initiatives and encouraging innovation to improve connectivity before, during and after natural disasters, helping our regions to prepare, respond, and recover better than ever before.”

Dylan Bushell-Embling

## **Telstra InfraCo CEO urges collaboration on ‘energy resiliency’**

Telstra InfraCo CEO Brendon Riley has outlined a draft discussion framework to help guide industry collaboration to bolster the “energy resiliency” of Australia’s networks. Riley used the first day of the CommsDay Summit to propose an industry meeting to discuss the issue and attempt to forge a clearer position on it.

Riley said that while “energy resilience has always been a significant risk for us to manage”, meetings with stakeholders have convinced him of the “need to think differently about how we prepare for emergencies, operate during them and recover following the event.”

“And that’s simply because climate driven events, energy and network outages, community and societal expectations and political priorities have combined to raise the bar on what’s expected from the telecommunications sector. And the telecommunications sector today mostly runs on electricity.”

The draft framework detailed by Riley includes a focus on industry collaboration. “Energy resilience is an important issue for all of us; it’s important we have a point of view and a game plan,” he said. “How do we collaborate together with major stake-





holders to demonstrate our ownership of this issue and a commitment to play our part in further improving the resiliency of Australia's telecommunications environment?"

It extends to network design and issues around batteries, generators, grid reliability and event management, including improving coordination during outages, as well as the role of satellite services.

"Energy resilience is a real issue across most states, with a range of different actions and approaches in train," Riley said. "How do we coordinate activities across the states and what role does the federal government play? I think governments are good at scale ideas and providing funding where industry would not otherwise invest.

"How do we help identify the changes in policy settings we as a country need and which also support additional investment in energy infrastructure?"

Riley said that the reliability of the grid in remote areas needed to improve and the time for new connections needed to fall.

He said that the cost of a new connection for a site is approaching \$100,000 on average and taking over 12 months from the time of application. In many cases telcos' applications are processed in the same way as a new residential connection. Riley said that given the changing expectations on the availability of telco services it was time for the telco and energy sectors to "work together to evolve processes and improve connection times."

During his keynote address Riley outlined some of the investments Telstra had made in energy resilience. Telstra itself is the 17th largest user of electricity from the grid, consuming 1.2tWh every year. That helps power the telco's more than 12,000 mobile sites, 7000+ exchanges and shelters, several data centres and thousands of smaller sites.

Last year the telco experienced 90,000 power outages at sites, with a combined duration of over 400,000 hours.

Telstra has over a gigawatt hour of energy storage capacity across its network and is trialling newer battery technologies and hydrogen fuel cells.

"We are also working on another 100% renewable standalone power system, utilising solid state storage for hydrogen, produced using the excess energy from solar," Riley revealed.

Telstra has been working on two additional options to help keep sites online during power outages. One is Automatic Transfer Units that the telco developed with a Western Sydney company and can switch from mains power to a generator without the need for a technician's intervention. It also supports the easy deployment of generators at a site by emergency services or local government.

The company is also investing in standalone power systems, or SAPs, which provide power without a grid connection, typically through a large solar array. Telstra currently manages more than 1800 off-grid sites. It has been rolling out its own SAPs, with currently 203 of them deployed.

"We are also working with Western Power, Horizon Power, and Ergon Energy to transition from electricity grids to SAPs at selected sites as part of their rollout programs," Riley said.

The telco undertakes climate scenario planning to identify, assess and manage cli-

mate-related risks. The process integrates these risks into operational decision-making, Riley said.

“The infrastructure assets we operate and build now need to be designed for the climate of the future. Our focus is providing simplified and resilient infrastructure, identifying and removing single points of failure where possible, replacing end-of-life equipment and increasing automation.”

Rohan Pearce

## **Optus talks 3G closure, recovery after a turbulent year**

Optus has explained what it is doing to mitigate negative effects of the planned closure of the 3G network later this year. In a speech at CommsDay Summit, Optus executive Matt Williams also stated that the company has had a turbulent year but is now recovering momentum.

“I’m extremely optimistic about the year ahead, despite the turbulence, and it’s very clear that we’ve got a very clear purpose for the business - which is to connect Australians,” he said on Tuesday.

“We also have the capabilities and the focus now to really deliver on that.”

“The good news is that our business is showing good signs of recovery. And in the last quarter, we reported that we had growth of customers - which is very pleasing the quarter after the outage,” the telco’s MD customer solutions added.



“We’re also seeing strong progress on our brand and metrics showing that what we’re doing is now starting to really resonate with our customers.”

Optus’ 3G network will shut down in September with the telco looking to refarm its 900MHz spectrum for its 5G rollout.

“[By refarming spectrum] that will mean that we’re able to provide more coverage, more capability and more usability for our customers with their 5G service,” Williams said.

“The key is going to be getting customers to take the step from 3G to 4G and 5G.”

Hundreds of thousands of customers have made the shift since initial communications in 2022, he added.

“There’s quite a bit of work to go in terms of engaging with those customers and making sure that they are aware of this change and really embracing that shift. We need them to take that action for us,” Williams said.

A key aspect of Optus’ recovery plan from its November 8 outage - which saw almost 10 million people unable to connect over a 12 hour period - is the rollout of its high-speed 5G network.

“For more than two years now, we have engineered our network and have delivered Australia's fastest 5G,” Williams continued.

“Australians want speed and they also want consistency of that experience.”

He added Monday's announcement with TPG to share regional infrastructure is a part of the telco's plan to continue upgrading its network.

“This agreement is very significant because it means that we're going to share a large part of the mobile network infrastructure and also share the spectrum together,” Williams said.

“It means that we're able to accelerate the rollout of our 5G network and to bring more 5G to more Australians across those regional areas.”

Williams acknowledged current market provides economic challenges as many customers struggle with the cost of living crisis.

“As we deliver our services, we're very conscious of the need to make sure that we deliver those in the context of the connection being more important than ever before,” he said.

“That comes down to making sure the connections have the right quality, the right value for money, and also the features that truly meet their needs.”

Hannah Wilcox

## **Business 5G adoption lagging, AMTA CEO warns**

Slow adoption of 5G by businesses puts Australia at risk of falling behind both technologically and economically, the chief executive of the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association said yesterday.

AMTA CEO Louise Hyland told CommsDay Summit that Australia was an early adopter of 5G. However, “take-up and usage of the technology has subsequently plateaued, resulting in Australia slipping from fifth place globally in 2020 and 2021 to twentieth place in 2023,” Hyland said, citing GSMA Intelligence report. Australia was ranked fifth out of 113 countries in 2020 for the percentage of the population with 5G devices, but by 2023 had slipped to 20th place.

AMTA is “seeking to work with the Australian government to highlight the benefits and applications of 5G across various industries,” Hyland said.

Although the association welcomed the federal government's acknowledgement of 5G and 6G as critical technologies, “Australia does not have a national policy or strategy for the utilisation of 5G and 6G,” the CEO said adding that “without a well-defined plan, the full potential of these critical enabling technologies may not be realised.”

The technologies should be part of a “broader national strategy framework” through a “comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy,” Hyland said. AMTA has urged the government to create a National Mobile Tech Strategy, which would be an





opportunity for the mobile sector to work closely with government “to ensure we have co-ordinated policy across government which leverages the benefits of 5G and plans for future mobile technologies.”

The strategy would also look at issues around mobile spectrum and streamlined infrastructure deployment. A key component would be government R&D investment. Hyland said there would be a role for public-private partnership and incentives to adopt 5G.

The AMTA CEO cited the example of South Korea, where early in the nation’s 5G rollout the government committed to spending around \$117 million on 5G R&D as well as offering an investment tax credit to telcos to encourage them to build new base stations.

Hyland also addressed the planned shutdown of the 3G networks, which she noted would release additional spectrum for use with 5G. Mobile operators have been communicating with customers for over a year and in some cases over two years, she said.

“AMTA communicated the change to its stakeholders and to consumers through the media in November last year,” Hyland said. “We recently established a dedicated working group, launched a comprehensive information website, and industry has been working closely with government agencies to ensure a structured and timely transition for all Australians, and will continue to do so.”

**DIGITAL SKILLS:** AMTA was supportive of the government’s Jobs and Skills Council and an active participant in the Future Skills Organisation, Hyland said.

She said the association was “advocating for agreement on a national standard on curriculum, cross border/institution recognition and accreditation, as well as a mechanism for ongoing industry input to keep the content/quality of any accreditation relevant and contemporary with changing technology.”

The CEO said that fostering a skilled workforce, including both technical skills for the telco and tech sectors as well as digital literacy, was “critical”.

Rohan Pearce

## **Network native security remains an untapped market for CSPs, says Allot**

Network native security products for consumers and small & medium-sized businesses represent a largely untapped market for communications service providers, says Allot CEO Erez Antebi.

According to the supplier of security solutions for CSPs to provide just such services, traditional assumptions that only large enterprises and organisations are concerned or are willing to pay for CSP-delivered security services are no longer valid.

In Australia, an Allot survey found that 62% of Australian consumers now want to see security as part of their package from CSPs while 68% of the country’s SMBs believe it is the responsibility of the CSPs to provide security from the network.

Further, the survey found widespread awareness of cyberthreats in Australia across the two market categories: 63% of SMBs citing a high likelihood of attack and 79% confirming their business is at risk while 77% of consumers said it was “important to be protected” while 94% said they would pay for security services.

CSPs not targeting these segments are missing out on an opportunity that not only increases their revenue but also increases customer loyalty.

Citing financial data from operators in Europe and the US, Antebi said operators have successfully increased their consumer ARPU by between 5% and 8% by offering security for between €0.99 and €1.50 per month. In the SMB space, Telefonica and Verizon are selling such security capabilities for €10 and US\$10-US\$20 per month, equivalent to as much as 20% of their ARPU.

In Australia, Antebi believes CSP-delivered security services can generate between \$2 to \$3 of extra ARPU per month for consumers and some \$7 per month for SMBs.

At the same time, Antebi said the more aggressive a CSP goes to market, the higher the adoption rate. “With a reasonable go to market strategy, you can get 30% to 40% of the customer base. With a very aggressive one, you can get up to 50% of the customer base.”

Lastly, Antebi pointed to figures from Telefonica Spain, which shows customers with security subscriptions were less likely to leave the network.

“If you look at the communications market in general, I think by now we should all agree that coverage, speed and quality are more or less commoditised. Everybody expects coverage to be ubiquitous, they expect high speeds, they expect very very high quality,” he said. “Network-based cybersecurity will be the next big differentiator for operators.”

Tony Chan



## Performance-based charging is the next step in network monetisation: Ericsson

The ability to differentiate service capabilities and potentially charged fees based on network performance is now becoming the next step towards network monetisation for 5G operators, said Ericsson Australia and New Zealand CEO Emilio Romeo at the CommsDay Summit.

As 5G gains maturity globally with some 300 live networks and 1.6 billion subscribers, or 20% of the global mobile subscription based, operators are now looking beyond the initial use cases of enhanced mobile broadband and fixed wireless access services to drive returns from their 5G investments.



Specifically, the implementation of 5G standalone — now deployed by about 40 networks globally — will enable a new set of capabilities such as network application programming interface exposure and network slicing to deliver new services, which

together allows applications to initiate performance requests.

Pointing to Singtel's trial of network slicing at this year's Singapore Formula One race, Romeo said such performance-based use cases, and thus business models, are already a reality today.

"We are charging voice by the minute and texting per text, we've seen mobile broadband subscriptions, this is the next level. This is where you get charged based on the performance you are getting from the network.. this is an area with opportunity here," he said. "What it is is that you subscribe to a particular level of performance and we believe discrete, finite performance levels will really be the trend that will set the industry going forward."

Further, Romeo said the capabilities are also taking root in the enterprise market. According to Romeo, Ericsson has developed a so-called "proof of value engine" for enterprises with Telstra.

"What they have created is a solution and a tool that they put in the hands of their customers and it measures the performance based on network slicing and other network features from Ericsson," he said. "What it does is it measures the performance by the second. If the performance is not met, the customer doesn't get charged. So that gives confidence to the customer that they are getting what they are paying for." The solution is currently being trialed at a construction customer, he added.

Tony Chan

## **Coleman questions NBN performance**

Shadow minister David Coleman has said NBN Co's performance raises "significant questions" for the federal government.

He told the CommsDay Summit that NBN had seen a "very significant decline" in brownfields connections of 64,000 since June 2022.

"For the government and taxpayers, it is very difficult to see how the loss of customers in the NBN's largest product category can be anything other than a troubling sign," he said in remarks prepared for the conference.

"As 5G becomes more and more competitive in providing Internet services, it's clear that some customers are walking away from the more expensive NBN products."

He also said there had been a "significant acceleration in negative cashflow", with the December half "showing an outflow of more than \$1 billion, up by more than \$400 million on the corresponding period in 2022."

The shadow minister also questioned the move by NBN Co to revamp its wholesale speed tiers so soon after the conclusion of the Special Access Undertaking revamp.

"It does nothing to instil confidence in the SAU process – and leaves RSPs having to scramble to deal with the new regime, as the ink from the SAU approval was barely dry," Coleman said.



“And the argument that consumers will access the faster speeds for free is, to be frank, just silly, as experts have pointed out.

“Most relevant for consumers is that the prices of the lowest cost plans have gone up significantly, and will continue to go up. This is particularly troubling during a cost of living crisis, as households on the lowest cost plans will generally be the households with the least ability to absorb price rises.”

**AGE VERIFICATION:** Coleman said that the circulation on social media of footage and images in the aftermath of the two high-profile Sydney stabbing attacks showed the need for age verification.

“We must get moving on age verification for social media,” he told the conference. He noted that the previous government in 2021 had “asked the eSafety Commissioner to look into the issue of online age verification.”

“We wanted the Commissioner to examine the feasibility of introducing an age verification system to protect children from dangerous content online,” he said.

Coleman noted that the Coalition had opposed the government’s misinformation bill but would “carefully review” any revised bill. “But we will not agree to a Bill which compromises legitimate political speech,” he said.

Rohan Pearce

## **Indara lauds TIND policy, promises new tech to optimise coverage**

Citing heightened community expectations for wireless coverage, Indara welcomed the push to include obligations around wireless in new developments promising at the same time optimised infrastructure roll outs that combined an expanded portfolio of solutions and the latest digital twin technology.

According to Indara customer & property executive director Jason Horley, before the arrival of the new revised TIND, wireless was often an afterthought that resulted in poor coverage for some communities.

“In building and upgrading existing and new communities, we routinely see a lot of planning going into other essential infrastructure, including roads, into water, into power also fixed line broadband but our councils, state governments, developers have historically not been overly proactive in the early planning stages when provisioning wireless connectivity,” he told the CommsDay Summit 2024.

“And often wireless arrives late for communities... so many of the efforts [wireless infrastructure roll outs] that we’ve talked about don’t accrue equally across our society... More recently, we have seen some positive changes in regulation announced by the minister, the TIND announcement, which puts responsibility on developers to ensure that as new houses and infrastructure is built, that there is a greater level of consideration for wireless telecommunications.”

The trend is part of a broader emphasis to ensure wireless connectivity is delivered to communities across Australia.

“The way we deliver coverage and capacity and resilience is changing rapidly,” he said. “We are seeing an expanded willingness of different players within the industry to invest in wireless infrastructure.”

While mobile network operators have historically “carried the brunt... investing 13% to 20% of their service revenue into building more infrastructure,” Horley said mobile network infrastructure providers such as Indara, “are stepping up to the plate significantly and building 1,000 sites in the pipeline,” including 700 towers that Indara is building.

At the same time, Horley said wireless infrastructure is also becoming a focus for state governments and developers alike, which are investing in blackspots and expanding their investments from rural areas to peri-urban areas while putting up fixtures to ensure facilities, buildings or stadiums have much higher levels of connectivity. To complement this trend, Horley said Indara has invested in expanding its capabilities, including the addition of new solutions to its current portfolio of mostly macro rooftops.

“We are also investing in smart poles, small cells and indoor systems, really with the objective of being able to provision the right wireless infrastructure to meet the needs of the community we are serving, for example, you’ll see our smart poles in Sydney’s Royal Botanical Gardens,” he said. “Also, in many regional towns... these are locations where historically, it has been difficult to deliver a macro tower, so we are trying to deliver capacity into those regions in a different way.”

Meanwhile, Indara is also embracing new technologies, namely digital twins.

“We hold huge amounts of information on these assets. That information helps to drive quality and efficiency when we are providing services and we see it as one of our competitive advantages,” he said. “Like other asset owners in recent years, we have invested heavily in digital twins. We see digital twins will improve our strategy around acceleration, but more importantly, we will also see digital twin will enhance the precision of how networks are deployed and through that precision, we’ll see networks be able to transmit more data but also operate more effectively from an energy perspective, which is becoming an increasingly important consideration.”

Tony Chan

## **BAI sees growing opportunities for neutral host**

Customer demand, technology change and the attitude of regulators and governments has combined to open opportunities for neutral host providers, BAI director of telecoms Nick Gurney said yesterday.

Gurney joined BAI two years ago with a remit to build a “public and private wireless telco business,” he told the CommsDay Summit.

The company is seeking to bring its international experience, which includes multi-decade agreements with New York’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority and Transport for London to deliver wireless communications networks, to bear in the Australian market.

Locally BAI is building “a true neutral host business” focusing on public and private wireless, “providing end to end services from design through to operations and ownership,” he said.

Customers have increasing expectations when it comes to connectivity during their commutes, in cities and inside office buildings. In-building connectivity in Australia is patchy, with only around a fifth of distributed antenna systems supporting all three



MNOs. Gurney also said that ports and manufacturing are “really crying out” for the kind of low latency services that can be delivered by 5G, and that fans were demanding an “amazing” experience when they attend stadium events.

“From an industry perspective, the customers want to have lower costs, more flexibility and more choice through neutral hosts and in terms of technology,” he said. He said in the US and UK the promise of Open RAN was “becoming a reality” with a “considerable move towards ORAN”.

In Australia, Gurney said he expects ORAN to initially take off in the “in-building space” where ORAN base stations “will bring down the cost of connectivity significantly for building owners and tenants.”

Noting that in Europe LTE private networks are starting to give way to 5G, Gurney said that there’s a “massive opportunity for the industry as a whole” to “really drive private wireless and 5G private wireless now”.

He also highlighted the push in Australia for active sharing in regional and remote Australia to address black spots and the digital divide facing Indigenous communities.

Rohan Pearce

### **AUSSIE BROADBAND V SUPERLOOP TO BE HEARD IN DECEMBER**

Aussie Broadband’s case against Superloop and the Superloop board is set to be heard in the Federal Court over the course of six days in December. Aussie Broadband is challenging a direction from the Superloop board that it reduce its shareholding in the smaller telco. Aussie Broadband reduced its shareholding to 11.99% early last month. Superloop’s constitution requires a shareholder to obtain approval from Singapore’s Infocomm Media Development Authority before accumulating a 12% or greater-- stake. Aussie Broadband has said it is seeking IMDA approval.

### **SES TO ACQUIRE INTELSAT**

SES has announced an agreement to acquire 100% of the equity of Intelsat for a cash consideration of US\$3.1 billion and certain contingent value rights. The firms said the transaction will create a “stronger multi-orbit operator with greater coverage, improved resiliency, expanded suite of solutions, enhanced resources to profitably invest in innovation.” More importantly, SES claims the deal will deliver €2.4 billion of readily executable synergies per net present value, which it expects to realise, after approximately €155 million of estimated costs, at an annual run rate of €370 million, of which approximately 70% is anticipated to be executed within 3 years. SES expects most of the synergies to come from the combination of selling, general, and administrative savings as well as optimisation of third-party capacity costs and future efficiencies in procurement. The remaining synergies will be captured from optimising the combined satellite fleets and ground infrastructure with the process expected to start soon after closing, at which point the firm will have a combined fleet of more than 100 geostationary earth orbit and 26 medium earth orbit satellites with 8 new GEOs and 7 new MEOs to be added by end-2026.

## 10 YEARS AGO IN COMMSDAY

The telecoms industry - along with media and information - was one of the most significant negative contributors to a general decline in Australian market sector productivity last year, according to the Productivity Commission. And the PC has said that it may take a closer look at the sector if the downwards trend continues.

Optus is planning to consolidate a number of roles within Australia on top of the 750 job losses it announced 18 months ago. The news also follows a previous announcement this week by M2 Group, which is targeting up to 150 job losses through a consolidation of positions.

Optus has confirmed a late May launch date for its new 10 satellite. Optus and Space Systems/Loral teams have completed the final review of the project, with the satellite packed and ready to be shipped to the Arianespace launch base in French Guiana.

Communications Alliance is concerned that proposals by the Australian Communications and Media Authority considering new spectrum allocations for ultra-wideband devices could impact C-Band satellite services.

Tata Communications has said that its expansion into Australia last month was not targeted at the domestic market, but rather international customers seeking multi-site solutions.

## LATEST SHARE PRICES

Company name	Chg %	Last price	Change	Volume	Market cap
5G Networks Limited	+3.33%	0.1550	+0.0050	18,905	52.363M
Aussie Broadband Limited	+1.09%	3.7100	+0.0400	921,846	1.095B
Comms Group Limited	+1.72%	0.0590	+0.0010	33,711	22.683M
Chorus Limited	-0.60%	6.59	-0.04	678,303	2.861B
Field Solutions Holdings Limited	0.00%	0.0310	0.0000	126,178	23.769M
Global Data Centre Group	+0.45%	2.2500	+0.0100	246,408	173.864M
Hutchison Telecommunications (Australia) Limited	0.00%	0.0290	0.0000	2,650	393.602M
Macquarie Technology Group Limited	-0.09%	81.43	-0.07	19,626	2.019B
Megaport Limited	-4.26%	13.50	-0.60	1,685M	2.152B
NEXTDC Limited	0.00%	16.69	0.00	2,187M	9.62B
Superloop Limited	+1.13%	1.3400	+0.0150	696,990	671.37M
Spark New Zealand Limited	+1.17%	4.3300	+0.0500	707,451	7.856B
Swoop Holdings Limited	0.00%	0.2000	0.0000	1,401	41.642M
Telstra Group Limited	+0.27%	3.6700	+0.0100	18,571M	42.405B
TPG Telecom Limited	+3.44%	4.5100	+0.1500	2,896M	8.386B
Vonex Limited	0.00%	0.0130	0.0000	609,849	4.704M

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## About Communications Day (including Space & Satellite AU & The Line New Zealand)

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