

TELSTRA CLAIM:
ATUG now a lobby group
“without a cause”



Nextep into wireless broadband

ISPhone wants to enter NGN world

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NSW land agency issues statewide RFP for broadband networks

NSW government property development agency Landcom has issued a wide ranging RFP for broadband services and infrastructure across all its new estates.

Perhaps the most sophisticated and perhaps largest alternative network project to date, the RFP is open to individual carriers, infrastructure providers or consortia and aims to spearhead the “revolution” required to keep pace with exploding broadband demand.

The successful supplier will be appointed for an initial five-year term and at Landcom’s discretion, may be offered one or more extensions to the term.

The tender includes the rollout of broadband service to over 8,000 new housing development lots. It demands the deployment of telephony services comparable to that provided on Telstra’s copper network; high-speed data connections to the Internet or to other private networks, with connection options to at least 10 Mbps symmetric capacity; broadcast video services featuring a wide choice of content (free to air and pay TV) and demand-based video services.

The carrier must be in a position to assure the supply of services from the time that the first resident takes up occupancy. Landcom said that the diversity of services that are offered and the price at which they are offered will be a key consideration in evaluating proposals.

100MBPS DEMAND: Landcom demands that the connected broadband network infrastructure must be armed with substantial reserve capacity to meet rising bandwidth demand in the future which equates to the preferred capability of delivering 100 Mbps to each customer.

The RFP documents suggest that FTTH is one approach capable of delivering the desired level of network performance, but does not preclude any access technologies. The selected carrier will take primary responsibility for selecting and managing the network technology platform over which services are delivered.

Landcom has been trialling FTTH at its Prince Henry site at Little Bay in Sydney’s Eastern suburbs over the last few months in preparation for this open tender. Landcom FTTH project consultant FutureComms Design principal Tim Phipps said that property buyers have been demanding services such as high speed Internet access, video on demand and a choice of providers. He added that the property developers have also set a clear mandate to create “the most level playing field possible” for service providers so consumers can have the technology they want, when they want and at competitive prices.

“It is no longer acceptable to be tied into doing business with Telstra or Optus, and open network allows other providers to have access to consumers and to the possibility of offering new services such as IPTV, VoIP and VoD often at up a third of the price of traditional suppliers,” Phipps said.

The RFP notes that while Landcom anticipates working with a single party in meeting the requirements of this RFP, it will be concerned to avoid a monopoly outcome where end-users are excluded from the benefits of competition. As such, the RFP is asking for respondents to explain how they would facilitate a level of competition over time. “Possibilities include offering an effective wholesale access regime, operating under “open network” principles, or relying on facilities-based competition,” the RFP states.



LANDCOM
Creating Better Communities

Nextep latest carrier to dabble in wireless access

NEC broadband subsidiary Nextep is moving into the wireless access space, securing a wholesale 'master services' agreement with ambitious wireless broadband carrier Access Providers.

Nextep managing director Duncan Wallace told Communications Day that Nextep has been using Access Providers for wireless connectivity solutions on a customer demand basis for some time, but until now had not formalised and marketed the service to its customer base.

Wallace said that the Access Providers service provided a strong complement to Nextep's fixed solutions. He said that typically existing customers would use wireless broadband as redundancy or network infill for areas where ULL and tier 2 is not available. He added that it also worked well as an interim connectivity solution for customers who were waiting on broadband provisioning as it usually takes 3 days to install.

Wallace said while Access Providers was the only wireless broadband provider it was using currently, the deal was not exclusive and Nextep was "constantly looking for new access solutions as they become available."

Meanwhile, Optus also confirmed that it had signed a master service agreement with Access Providers. The carrier already uses a variety of wireless technology platforms including the iBurst service. Optus Director, Southern Region Rob Parcell, said, "by using Access Providers existing wireless network, we are able to offer increased connectivity to our business customers for their voice and data requirements, and all through a single service provider. We are delighted that Access Providers' network is extensive enough to service many of our major customers in Melbourne and Sydney."

Access Providers Chairman Keith Ondarchie said both agreements represented a significant milestone in the growth of Access Providers.

"By utilizing Access Providers wireless technology, both Optus and Nextep Broadband can offer their business customers speed of installation, cost effectiveness, reliability and a quality of service network that can provide a single solution to voice and data communications," Ondarchie added.

Natalie Apostolou

Microsoft Aussie chief promoted to Seattle VP role

Microsoft Australia and New Zealand Regional Vice President Steve Vamos has been promoted to the role of Vice President, International, Online Services Group, based in Seattle. In the new role which will take effect from April 2007, Vamos will be responsible for Microsoft's global subsidiary online services, in all countries outside the United States.

Vamos served as Regional VP and MD for Microsoft Australia and New Zealand since February 2003. Prior to his role at Microsoft, he was CEO of ninemsn, which he led from start-up to a leading online content and interactive software media company in Australia. He will remain on the board of ninemsn in this new role.

Vamos said that the new role blends and builds on his 25 year experience in the technology industry and "puts me at the heart of Microsoft's efforts in the online services space."

Microsoft will announce Vamos' local successor prior to his move to his new role in April, 2007. "The management team of Microsoft in ANZ is a very strong one, and I expect them to continue to build on the progress we have made over the past four years to strengthen our relationships with customers, partners, Government, industry and the community," he said.

Internode buys Cisco gear

Internode has stocked up on additional Cisco core and edge Internet equipment to drive its network expansion for the provision of ADSL2+ services such as IPTV throughout metropolitan and regional Australia.

Internode would not disclose the amount of investment in its new network hardware but said that its recent network expansion involved the purchase of two Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Switches and its sixth Cisco GSR 12000 Series router. The carrier-class Cisco 12000 Series Router was deployed in Adelaide and linked to Internode's five other Cisco 12000 routers in North America and Sydney.

The carrier plans to expand its flagship business service, Internode Business Connect, which offers private IP networks to businesses, following the network upgrade. It also provides the foundation for Internode's continuing national expansion, including into areas of regional Australia.

Internode Managing Director Simon Hackett said "the Cisco routers' MPLS capability means we can offer rock-solid private networks to businesses and public Internet access at the same time, with no technical compromises for either service. It also means our network is primed for video and IPTV services, a critically important next step for Internode."

Hackett added that using Cisco MPLS protocols in its regional backbone networks means that end-to-end MPLS-based VPNS can be constructed to originate in an Australian town and terminate anywhere else across the Internode backbone, through to and including California.

Natalie Apostolou

Telstra claim: ATUG a group without a cause

The Australian Telecommunications Users Group has laughed off suggestions from Telstra that it is a "lobby group without a cause."

Telstra made the charge yesterday on its weblog in a criticism of ATUG's support for the competition policy regime.

"ATUG has gradually morphed into a mouthpiece for the SingTel Optus and other telecom operators who rely on leaching on Telstra shareholder's investments and only care about creaming as much profits as they can in the big city market," Telstra said.



"Managing Director Rosemary Sinclair has demonstrated she shares the Graeme Samuel-Helen Coonan 'Marie Antoinette' view of the world that everything is really okay in Australia when it comes to broadband speeds and availability."

Sinclair told Communications Day yesterday that "Competition is at the core of our concerns. For 25 years ATUG has worked for competition in telecommunications - we are not about to move away from that focus however inconvenient it may be for some unidentified commentators."

She added that ATUG believed that issues such as broadband speeds and quality of service, access pricing and funding for universal service obligation need to be addressed.

"ATUG will always participate in these debates "pushing the barrow" of the long term interests of end users," Sinclair said.

Telstra concluded its online attack stating "While it's understandable that politicians prefer to ensourage (sic) broadband investment by handing out big fat cheques and power-drunk regulators support a communistic central planning approach, we think it's time for ATUG to stop supporting such nonsense and rediscover the private enterprise free-market ethos that originally prompted its formation."

In response, Sinclair said "I'm not sure there could be a more free enterprise organisation than ATUG - we exist in the marketplace of ideas, supported by funding from our members with no market power, bundling tactics or fine print."

ISPhone to become NGN service provider

Wholesale VoIP provider ISPhone Australasia has flagged plans to significantly increase its white-label offerings to business service providers, fleshing out its current voice services with VPN and ADSL broadband.

While believed to be in early-stage testing with a number of reseller partners, ISPhone is yet to announce a launch date for its expanded offering. The company has secured wholesale arrangements for both VPN and ADSL, which it aims to pass along as a complimentary service to its VoIP resellers.

ISPhone National Business Development Manager Beth Mackenzie told CommsDay yesterday its resellers were attracted by the one-stop-shop concept. "We want to make it easier for them to build a service offering for SMEs without having to shop around. If they already have providers for VPN or ADSL then that's fine. For us it's all about hand-holding and sharing the love," she said.

To spearhead its transition to "fully-fledged next-generation network service provider," ISPhone has appointed former COMindico network architect and internetworking infrastructure manager James Spenceley as its first-ever Chief Technical Officer. He will be responsible for expanding its

operations, including the strategic planning and implementation of new networks as well as the training and development of staff.

ISPhone Managing Director Gavin McDougal said the appointment was necessary to cope with growth. He said, "in the last year alone, we have experienced phenomenal growth from SMEs looking to deploy VoIP. However, this is still a fairly immature market. As we continue to grow, James's wealth of knowledge and experience in the industry will be invaluable to our commitment to deliver industry-leading innovations for our customers."

Tim Marshall

Alvarion confirmed for Fiji tourist WiMAX

Fijian operator Fintel has confirmed the selection of Alvarion to rollout a nationwide WiMAX wireless broadband network supporting the demands of the tourist market.

As reported by CommsDay in November, Fintel has already employed Sydney-based systems integrator Paclink Communications to facilitate the project. Deployment works are now underway with an initial service launch expected early next year.

In a statement yesterday Fintel said the initial rollout will focus around the capital Suva before expanding to more than 330 Fijian islands. The network will employ Alvarion's BreezeMAX certified WiMAX solution operating in the 3.3GHz band.

According to Fintel Commercial & Business Development Manager Jone Wesele, "we are pleased to be able to bring the '4G' services of WiMAX to the Fiji Islands. As a complement to our existing fibre and satellite networks, BreezeMAX has proven to be ideal for our island terrain... and meets the demanding bandwidth and service requirements of our busy tourist industry."

The Fijian project is the latest in a series of WiMAX wins for Alvarion in the South Pacific. It has other deals with Tonga Communications Corporation and Slingshot in New Zealand.

Alvarion CEO Tzvika Friedman said, "we applaud Fintel's decision to strategically integrate the excellent business case of BreezeMAX to add broadband data services to its already existing network capabilities... WiMAX services will give the Fiji tourist industry a substantial boost with the corresponding economic benefits."

Tim Marshall

Vodafone offers some free advice on mobile value

Australians are wasting as much as \$1 billion annually by selecting ill-suited mobile plans, according to Vodafone, which is ramping up plans to capture a bigger slice of the Christmas sign-up market.

Vodafone Australia Mass Markets General Manager Richard Sherwood said yesterday the average Australian could be wasting hundreds of dollars a year on the wrong mobile plan or not noticing discrepancies. He said Newspoll research commissioned by Vodafone showed that 48 per cent of Sydney residents aged 18-64 fail to check their mobile bills all of the time. Worse, almost a third of those people spent less than an hour researching and selecting a mobile plan.

"Research tells us that watching mobile spend is just not a priority for the average Aussie who could be wasting hundreds every year without even realising," Sherwood said. He said half the population half doesn't understand all the benefits of our current mobile package.

Whether consumers should be more attentive or mobile providers should be more clear in their offers probably depends on which side of the network you sit on. But Sherwood insists that consumers have to get more savvy.

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“These figures make it clear that Australians are not making educated choices about their mobiles. There are a few simple tips to use when shopping around for a new mobile phone plan, which will help people choose the best plan for their needs,” Sherwood said.

One of the leaders in the ‘capped’ plan market, Vodafone of course suggests such offers as the best way to “avoid bill shock and get value for money.” It suggests users monitor their usage to ensure they get the best value for money.

Tim Marshall

Ninemsn brings phone system into the 21st century

One of the country’s biggest online media players has dragged its phone system into the IP era, Ninemsn deploying a Cisco Systems VoIP system across its Sydney and Melbourne office network.

Supplied and installed by IP network and managed solutions provider NetStar Australia, the new VoIP system will replace an outdated PABX. Ninemsn said it will provide the flexibility needed for a “constantly evolving company.” He said, “we are a fast-paced, innovative organisation and felt that VoIP was the logical answer to replace our old PABX telephone system.”

Ninemsn has over 250 employees spread across its Sydney and Melbourne bases, all of whom will be connected to Cisco Softphone IP Communicator and Cisco Call Manager systems. Unified Messaging is expected to be implemented in the future.

Tim Marshall

Alcatel-Lucent wins 263m Euro deal with BT

Alcatel-Lucent has signed an eight year E263 million managed services contract with BT, under which the vendor will assume responsibility for the majority of BT Global Services’ equipment maintenance and spares management contracts. The significant outsourcing deal covers First Line Maintenance, Second, Third and Fourth Line Support and Spares Management. BT said it expects to derive cost savings in excess of Euros 75 million over the lifetime of the contract.

BT Global Services, President of Customer Service and Network Operation Roel Louwhoff said the move to a single point-of-contact supplier, will reduce the complexity of managing a large number of vendors, while service level agreements will remain at the current high level, or be improved where needed. “This innovative approach is in line with our strategy and commitment to combine ambitious cost reduction programmes with improvements in customer service. Alcatel-Lucent's innovative thinking and its experience in delivering best in class services is widely recognised in the industry,” he said.

Emerging NZ telco sees opportunities

Newly appointed general manager at CallSouth, Brent Matthews, sees plenty of opportunities ahead for the South Island-based junior telco.

The company started out as a tolls reseller and moved out into lines and the Internet and now sees exciting opportunities as the market further opens up to competition. CallSouth’s exclusive wholesale partner is Telecom New Zealand and Matthews says the company is happy with services received to-date.

“Close to 50 per cent of our customer base now has lines and the internet so they’re embracing that opportunity,” says Matthews.

On announcing Matthews’ appointment, CEO Peter Roborgh commented, “We have a loyal customer base that stretches from Kaitaia to Bluff. However, we have perhaps not been as aggressive as we could have been in communicating the CallSouth advantage.”

While unbundling is providing a fair amount of interest, Matthews points to the provincial nature of CallSouth’s customer base. “We’re keeping a close eye on the unbundling space, but our customers are more provincially based.”, says Matthews. “We’d also like to get more involved in some of the industry bodies such as ISPANZ.”

CallSouth is looking at reselling mobile with Matthews suggesting the timing could suit around mobile number portability, scheduled for April next year. This year Vodafone commenced discussions with Orcon, M2, Compass and TeamTalk. More service providers are expected to join. Revenues are not disclosed for the privately held company although customer numbers are understood to be in the tens of thousands. The group employs 120 staff primarily in Oamaru and Dunedin.

The group includes contact centre outsource operation Pulse Outsource which is based in Dunedin. CallSouth is based in Oamaru and its directors and shareholders include Peter Roborgh, Bill Hight, Lorraine Witten, David Douglas and Matthews. It was established in 2000 and has branches in Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Oamaru.

Matt Freeman

SENETAS RAISES \$40M

IT security hardware and solutions company Senetas has raised \$40 million via a combination of a private placement of 46.02 million shares at 55 cents a share and a convertible note for \$14.72 million. IKL Management Group, an investment company representing significant investors based in the US and several other countries. IKL took up the share placement and holds the convertible note. IKL will also acquire 21 million shares from Senetas Chairman, Francis Galbally, Director Ron Lunt and another associated Senetas shareholder. Following the transactions, IKL will hold approximately 13.2% of the ordinary share capital of Senetas. The capital raising will go towards future strategic investment, possibly international but the company advised that the nature of the future investment will be commercially confidential for "some time."

GOTALK RELEASES VISA CARD

VoIP and calling card provider Gotalk has launched a branded version of Bill Express's prepaid Visa card. The bopo card, Australia's first general purpose reloadable prepaid Visa card, was launched by Bill Express earlier this year. The Gotalk Visa card enables customers to load money to the gotalk bopo card at more than 3,400 Bill Express locations across Australia. The maximum card balance is \$1000 and can load up to \$2000 worth of deposits within a 30-day period. For higher transactions limits cardholders must complete a standard 100-point identity check. gotalk bopo cards can be linked and funds can be transferred in real time between the linked cards via a simple SMS. "Apart from its many features, the gotalk bopo card will be of particular interest and convenience to our broadband internet, mobile phone and VoIP customers as a way to manage costs," said Gotalk CEO Steve Picton said.

AAPT GIZMO DEAL

AAPT has struck a partnership with tech support provider Gizmo for the provision of in-home tech support for AAPT's new WiFi modem customers. In a bundled deal from the carrier, Gizmo will offer specialised home network support to complement the rollout of AAPT's new WiFi service, due for launch this month. "Through our partnership with AAPT, Gizmo is helping Australians get the most out of their new digital lifestyle investments," said Gizmo CEO Brett Chenoweth. The AAPT and Gizmo WiFi network bundle will be available for \$199, which includes the AAPT WiFi modem and a home visit to set-up the new WiFi home network.

ANIMAL LOGIC HOUSES WITH EQUINIX

Animal Logic, the company behind Australian animation success story Happy Feet is expanding its operations at the Sydney data centre facilities of Equinix. The three-year deal will see Animal Logic use the Equinix internet hub as a primary production facility for file serving, 3-D rendering and post-production work. Equinix claims the recent Happy Feet production involved on of the biggest supercomputing sites in the world with over 4,000 CPUs, "the largest supercomputing site in Australia by far."

MOOTER PICKS ACCIPITER FOR CHINESE AD PLAY

The Australian internet advertising outfit Mooter Media says it will use an online ad management system from US-based Accipiter to support its growing business in China. Using the Accipiter platform, Mooter says it will be able to offer impression based, display advertising, the dominant model for online display advertising in more mature markets, as a new alternative for its partners in China. Mooter intends to use its own proprietary page analysis and targeting technology to determine the most suitable ad for a particular situation and use Accipiter to campaign manage and deliver targeted display ads.