8th November 2023

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts
Via 'Have Your Say': https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/have-your-say/consultation-proposed-changes-provide-better-mobile-connectivity-new-developments

Consultation on Possible Amendments to the Telecommunications in New Developments Policy – Mobile Connectivity and Other Measures

Dear Department,

OneWiFi & Infrastructure (OneWiFi), is Australia's leading Mobile Neutral Host and Smart City solutions provider. OneWiFi is a licensed telecommunications carrier, a member of Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) and the Australian Smart Communities Association (ASCA). We are uniquely positioned to provide a balanced perspective to the Consultation Paper, as we closely work with and for the Mobile Network Operators (MNOs), Property Developers, Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITS), and Local Councils across our various lines of business.

OneWiFi welcomes the Telecommunications in New Development (TIND) Policy amendment as it will provide guidance and define obligations for Property Developers and MNOs, to ultimately safeguard property buyers and occupants by ensuring adequate mobile services from **multiple service providers** are readily available in new developments. We believe adequate multicarrier mobile services in new developments should be considered with equal importance to fixed broadband, and alongside other utilities such as electricity and gas. Hence, it is imperative for the appropriate upfront consideration, planning and engagements around mobile infrastructure between the relevant stakeholders, as well as reaching fair alignment on the scope and commercial obligations.

Mobile Connectivity as part of the overall Development Application (DA) process
OneWiFi supports the basic assessment that mobile coverage should be provisioned as part of Master Planning and DA to be undertaken by the Property Developer for developments above a certain size. We believe the undertaking of a basic assessment, based on a combination of a desktop study (e.g. analysis of RFNSA database), and an onsite mobile coverage walk test (for signal testing of all three MNOs across multiple bands), is not onerous nor costly for the Property Developer in the context of the overall development cost. Many larger and high-profile residential and commercial developments already undertake such assessment today. In addition, the basic assessment will provide insights on mobile coverage considerations and assist the Property Developer in identifying next steps and further required actions.

From an infrastructure design and planning perspective, we believe addressing mobile connectivity requirements, once known, would be an incremental scope change to existing technical design for power and communications. However, the Property Developer may encounter additional complexity due to the specialised nature of mobile radio and infrastructure planning, and face delays from the lack of transparency by MNOs on outdoor mobile coverage and capacity requirements at early stages of the development process.

For outdoor precincts, we suggest that any incremental early design considerations for mobile connectivity for new developments should have regard for potential synergies with power, fixed broadband telecommunications, and streetlighting infrastructure.

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For commercial buildings and multi-dwelling units (MDUs), there should be provision made for adequate space, power and ventilation as well as cable pathways and suitable locations for low profile mobile equipment across tenancy and common areas.

Early Engagement with MNOs on Mobile Connectivity
OneWiFi believes that the proposed timeframe of 12 months before the first unit/home is occupied is too late in the process to achieve any meaningful outcomes. By that time, many of the core infrastructure would have been planned, costed, contracted, and possibly constructed already. Any additional requirements and updates to specifications, at this late stage, would create significant scope change and unnecessary financial burden for the Property Developers. We believe that the engagement should commence in unison with Master Planning and DA stage to include the mobile connectivity objectives, and then in the design phase to incorporate the actual mobile connectivity requirements and specifications into the technical designs and drawings.

Currently, there is lack of a defined industry engagement process in place by the MNOs to adequately support the Property Developer around mobile infrastructure for new developments. Many of our Property Developer and Local Council partners have voiced their frustration in dealing with the MNOs, who are often unresponsive or bypasses the design and planning obligations, and pushes significant cost burden back to the Property Developer and associated parties, without making fair contribution. We believe it is essential for the TIND policy to outline an MNO engagement process that can be rectified by the appropriate industry body (e.g. Comms Alliance, AMTA) to ensure MNO compliance and provide adequate support to the Property Developers, Local Councils, and their appointed representatives.

Consider Land and other Assets that are appropriate for Mobile Infrastructure
OneWiFi believes that the TIND should not only focus on land suitable for mobile infrastructure but also take into account other assets, including pits, ducts, light poles, existing tower infrastructure and buildings. The use of land is only applicable if the development requires a new macro base station and there are no other towers to co-locate on. The Property Developer should look to extend the existing TIND obligations for fixed broadband - pit and pipes, to address mobile infrastructure requirements, to mitigate the need for MNOs to dig up, dismantle, then reinstate what may have only been recently completed.

With the increasing proliferation of Small Cells, the TIND policy should have regard for infrastructure and mobile network sharing opportunities on other asset types, such as street furniture and lighting poles, in new developments to minimise disruptions to the community, while improving visual aesthetics for the development. Provision of Street Lighting is generally a requirement of consent authorities for new developments, as part of providing roads and footpaths in new developments. These poles can also host small cell mobile infrastructure, which would be an efficient and environmentally sensitive approach to infrastructure provisioning.

We note that Property Developer obligations and specifications for Mobile In-Building Coverage (IBC) are well documented by the Mobile Carrier Forum (MCF), currently under the MCF2018 guidelines. The MCF guideline is applicable for commercial buildings, industrial buildings, and residential MDUs. We are unsure whether the intent of the possible TIND amendment extends to buildings and MDUs.

Reasonable Efforts to Reach Agreements with MNOs – Based on Open Access and Network Sharing Principles
OneWiFi believes that the TIND should focus on ensuring adequate mobile coverage and service options for property owners and occupants and facilitate a multicarrier outcome to enable true

consumer choice and industry competition for all new developments, similar to the existing fixed broadband regime.

In order to achieve this, better incentive alignments between the Property Developer, Local Council, and MNOs need to occur. These stakeholders, along with consumers and the broader community, would be beneficiaries of being able to deliver mobile services at the new development for different reasons. The cost and obligations for mobile connectivity should not sit completely with one party, and should be shared by all parties on a fair and equitable basis. However, it seems a vast majority of telecommunications infrastructure obligations and costs are often carried by the Property Developer, which seems disproportionate.

OneWiFi believes that mobile IBC and the current MCF guidelines is a case in point to illustrate the unfair distribution of costs and obligations to the Property Developer, and the unintended consequences for consumer choice and competition. Currently it is the de-facto model in IBCs, where the Property Developer has to pay all or a significant portion of the Distributed Antenna System (DAS) costs, including the MNO connection costs to enable mobile connectivity inside a building (e.g. commercial offices, hospitals, mixed use buildings). In addition, buildings are required to cater for the associated ancillary infrastructure (e.g. comms room, DAS room, riser space, antenna space) based on specifications defined by the MNOs, otherwise the MNOs may decline to connect at their sole discretion. Essentially, the lead MNO, and occasionally one other MNO, are paid by the Property Developer to offer a mobile service in the building. It is often the case that while the Property Developer and tenants would like to access mobile services from **all three MNOs**, they are unfortunately left with either a 'choice of one' or a 'choice of none' due to budget constraints and cost pressures having to be borne by the Property Developer. In the IBC domain, the lack of multicarrier outcomes and one-sided obligation can be entirely attributed to the prevailing MCF guidelines, which currently being defined only by the three MNOs, with very limited consultation with the Property sector. With the guideline being focused on what MNOs want, rather than what Property Developer needs, this creates unnecessary network duplication, over dimensioning, complexity, and in-turn excessive costs to the Property Developer. Therefore, many Property Developers will only engage with one MNO to connect, which leads to unintended widening of the coverage gap between the leading MNO and the challenger MNOs. This results in the lessening of competition.

OneWiFi strongly advocates that the TIND policy for mobile be based on similar shared infrastructure and open access principles of fixed broadband. A pathway that leverages common mobile equipment, network, and infrastructure would reduce the cost burden for all parties, while increasing visual amenity and reducing carbon footprint. Most importantly it would also enable the multicarrier outcomes to offer consumer choice and enable price or service-based competition. We recognise that this may require the appropriate levels of functional separation by the MNOs (similar to fixed broadband infrastructure), or the network is delivered and operated by a Neutral Host operator with no retail services.

Will there be a minimum standard for mobile telecommunications infrastructure?
Any planned mobile telecommunications infrastructure needs to be able to support and deliver 5G mobile services. 4G should no longer be considered the minimum standard.

OneWiFi would welcome the opportunity to provide further feedback to the Department on the TIND policy, if required. We would like to thank the Department proactively modernising telecommunication regulations and guidelines to deliver better outcomes for consumers, communities, and the industry.

Yours faithfully,

Gary Tsang
Commercial and Strategy Director
ONEWIFI & INFRASTRUCTURE