



Report into international mobile roaming released

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Communications' Report into international mobile roaming, *Phoning Home*, was released today. The Report examines the reasons why Australians pay so much for international mobile roaming.

"Those of us who have travelled overseas will have no doubt about the utility of international mobile roaming, a service that allows you to use your own phone and phone number wherever you are in the world," Ms Belinda Neal MP (Robertson, NSW), the Chair of the Committee, said. "Many of us also have our own stories of the shock of the mobile phone bill after travelling overseas."

During the inquiry, the Committee was confronted with evidence of roaming bills as high as tens of thousands of dollars.

The Committee found that the high cost of mobile roaming can be attributed to the lack of transparency of pricing to consumers, the complex technical nature of roaming, and to Australian telcos' inability to negotiate favourable deals for Australian customers.

To improve the bargaining position of Australian telcos, the Committee has recommended a policy of regulating the framework for the wholesale cost of roaming through bilateral and multilateral negotiations with other countries, ensuring that countries with the largest number of Australian visitors are given priority.

The Committee also believes competition can be enhanced within Australia. To do this, the Committee proposes that temporary mobile number portability for roaming services be explored. This will allow consumers to choose the best roaming deal for their needs.

The provision of information on roaming to customers can also be improved. The Committee has recommended that:

- the Australian Communications and Media Authority facilitate a meeting of the Communications Alliance to discuss the development of a minimum standard for consumer information and awareness on roaming and potential costs; and
- the Australian Government explore opportunities to collaborate with the Australian Telecommunications Users Group's 'Roam Fair' campaign.

The Committee also recommends that, to ensure travellers are aware of the alternatives to mobile roaming, these be incorporated into information on roaming provided by the Australian Government.

"There can be no doubt that it will take some time before Australians are offered really competitive roaming rates," Ms Neal commented, "but hopefully the Committee's recommendations will go some way to reducing the cost of phoning home in the near future."

The report is available on the Committee's website:

<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/coms/mobileroaming/index.htm>

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