

Regional Australians want better telecommunications competition now

Auspoll research finds consumers want Government to consider their needs ahead of shareholder interests

October 28, 2009 – Regional Australians are hungry for better competition, a level playing field for competitors and aren't buying arguments that they should have to wait any longer than necessary, according to a poll released today.

An Auspoll survey of regional New South Wales and Queensland, jointly commissioned by the Competitive Carriers' Coalition (CCC) and Optus, found consumers overwhelmingly believe the Government should put the interests of telecommunications customers ahead of the interests of Telstra shareholders in deciding how to regulate the industry.

"This survey is a powerful message to Senators presently being asked to consider the Government's legislation to promote telecommunications competition," Optus Director Corporate & Government Affairs Maha Krishnapillai said.

"The orchestrated threats from fund managers about an electoral backlash to telecommunications competition reforms don't bear up when the opinions of actual voters in the regions are tested," Mr Krishnapillai said.

Asked if the government should give more consideration to telecommunications customers or Telstra shareholders, a massive 95 percent responded that consumers should come first.

"The support for some of the specific measures being proposed by the Government is enormous," CCC executive director David Forman said.

Asked if Telstra's retail and wholesale businesses should be separated to create a competitive level playing field, 61 percent were in favour.

Asked if this change should occur now or be delayed until next year, 49 percent of regional people polled said it should not be delayed. Only 26 percent were in favour of a delay.

"Regional Australians are also well aware of the power of competition to lift the standards of services – 64 percent said they believed Telstra would improve its own performance if it faced more competition," Mr Forman said.

-Ends-

Editors note

About the survey:

- The survey was conducted online by Auspoll from October 20 to October 22 among respondents in regional and rural Queensland and NSW
- n = 1000, margin of error +/- 3.1%
- The data was weighted to reflect the Australian population. Numbers may not add up to 100 due to rounding

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Key Findings

In reforming the laws that regulate telecommunications, should the government give more consideration to the interests of Telstra's shareholders, or to the interests of telecommunications consumers including Telstra's customers?

	Single Response
More consideration to Telstra's shareholders	5
More consideration to telecommunications consumers including Telstra customers	95

Do you think Telstra's service in regional areas would get better or worse if there was more competition in telecommunications?

Would get a lot better	19
Would get better	46
Would stay the same	25
Would get worse	8
Would get a lot worse	3

The federal government wants to separate Telstra into its retail and wholesale components in order to create a more level playing field and bring more competition to the telecommunications sector. This means Telstra's phone service arm and telecommunications infrastructure arm would become different companies. Do you support or oppose this idea?

Strongly support	21
Support	40
Oppose	10
Strongly oppose	7
Don't know	22
Total support	61
Total oppose	17
Don't know	22

Telstra says that if a separation like the one described above goes ahead, it should be delayed until next year because Telstra wants more time to decide if

it will choose to separate by itself. Others say the government should act now because Telstra might not agree to make changes unless it is forced to. If the separation goes ahead, do you believe that it should take place now, or should it be delayed until sometime next year?

Should take place now	49
Should be delayed until next year	26
Don't know	26