



Communicate, Collaborate, Innovate

Australian
Telecommunications
Users Group

Media Release

Opening Address ATUG 2009

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Welcome to ATUG 2009 – ATUG’s annual update for members and industry partners on the issues of the moment and directions for the next 12 months.

At ATUG 2008 I spoke to you about ATUG’s PACT Campaign, to Protect Australia’s Competitive Telecommunications policy and to stop a determined and targeted effort to roll-back the regulations supporting competition and choice for end users, on the promise of a fast, fibre future

Happily ATUG can report that the PACT campaign has succeeded - with Competition and End Users Interests still at the centre of government and regulator decision making as Australia decides on its fibre future.

I also spoke about ATUG’s Roam Fair campaign to get better deals for Australians traveling for business or pleasure and using mobile roaming services – especially in countries that have moved to protect their own consumers and businesses and with whom Australia has trade and other bi-lateral agreements to facilitate dialogue.

Again I can report strong Government input in all the international meetings where something can be done about this issue.

We continue to see action in Europe to ensure users get a fair deal in prices for roaming services, especially in the current financial environment where value is important. ATUG wants the same outcome for Australian business and other travelers.

In the last 12 months ATUG has been focused on the National Broadband Network for Australia and that remains our Focus Campaign for 2009 – to ensure all Australians get access to “**game changing**” broadband services at affordable prices.

In January, ATUG’s Board confirmed our Policies for 2009:

- ATUG remains committed to competition
- We support regulation where competition is not effective
- ATUG supports the NBN process

The policy objectives must stay focused on the **interests of end users and effective competition**

All Australians must be able to connect to the NBN – not just metro customers but branch offices and businesses and consumers located outside metro areas throughout regional, rural and remote Australia

Affordability is the key to take-up – everyone must be able to get on board the NBN so that we actually get the transforming and productivity outcomes talked about so much. If broadband becomes unaffordable NONE of the big picture objectives will be met

End users must be able to exercise choice of broadband providers – the current process for changing providers stands in the way of end users exercising choice – mobile number portability drove much stronger competition in the mobiles market – we need the same strong demand driver for competition in the broadband market

Competition in an NBN world will depend on a much more effective wholesale market. ATUG cannot see how Australia as a whole can afford more than one fibre based network. **Open access and genuine wholesale equivalence** will be central to choice and competitive pricing

Clear separation between wholesale and retail is needed to deal with the conflict of interest problem that has bedeviled the sector once and for all

A new pro-active, pro-competition body, NBN Australia should be given the task of implementing the Open Access and Wholesale Equivalence Frameworks. NBNA should be set up as a one-stop shop for customers during the mammoth migration program that is going to be part of the move to “game changing” broadband for Australia.

- Confidence in the Digital Economy

In 2009, ATUG will focus our efforts in regional areas and with small and home based business users on broadband access, on online security and the migration to digital television.

- Better Value for End Users

ATUG supports the Minister’s calls and industry efforts to improve customer service levels as a way of delivering better value for customers in tough times. ATUG wants to see better value from industry for end users:

- Benchmarking of prices in corporate contracts
- Broadband speeds that end users can rely on – no more wishful thinking from marketing
- Call billing per second whether fixed or mobile – users should only pay for what they actually use
- Call connection rebates for mobile call drop outs

2009 is going to be a BIG YEAR in telecommunications in Australia. ATUG looks forward to the announcement of the National Broadband Network decision. We look forward to working with Government and Industry to ensure a successful migration by Australia to the NBN and to playing a role in the unfolding Digital Economy. While the backdrop is tough financially, ATUG believes there is a very strong demand driver for the NBN and the changes we need in the sector – and that is the development of the Digital Economy – the task and future ahead of all of us over the next decade!

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