

'useable' coverage level to avoid confusing consumers, but instead suggests using the term 'limited' instead.

The submission also recommends that MNOs be required to provide descriptions of coverage levels to include clearer examples of what a service can achieve, and to disclose known coverage blackspots or areas of congested coverage. MVNOs' coverage maps should reflect the coverage available to their customers specifically, and telcos should be required to provide direct links on their homepages to the coverage maps, the TIO added.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

Aussie Broadband, OneWiFi question reliability of proposed mobile coverage maps

Aussie Broadband and neutral host infrastructure provider OneWiFi have both urged the Australian Communications and Media Authority to ensure its proposed mobile coverage mapping standard better reflects real-world user experience, warning that current approaches risk confusing consumers and undermining confidence in published maps.

In its submission to the consultation on proposed mobile mapping standard, Aussie Broadband said the draft four-tier coverage classification could be useful but required clearer definitions tied to real service performance.

The Gippsland-headquartered provider, which supplies mobile services as a mobile virtual network operator, said consumers were unlikely to understand the practical difference between coverage descriptors such as "good", "moderate" and "usable".

"An SMS connection having 'moderate' performance is not likely to be understood by regular consumers; either the SMS sends and is received, or it isn't," the company said.

While the draft standard relies on signal thresholds expressed in dBm, Aussie Broadband argued that categories should instead be linked to expected performance outcomes.

"Coverage alone is not enough," the company said, noting that areas marked as covered could still deliver poor performance, such as single-digit data speeds.

It proposed that "good" coverage should correspond to reliable indoor and outdoor reception with consistent data performance, while "moderate" coverage should indicate reliable outdoor performance but variable indoor reception depending on building materials.

Aussie Broadband also said the draft standard does not distinguish between 4G and 5G coverage maps, which could create confusion about expected service performance. It suggested requiring separate maps, or at least a toggle allowing consumers to switch between the two.

As an MVNO, the provider said it would rely on host mobile network operators to supply updated coverage maps and called for clearer guidance on how quickly MVNOs must publish updates when operators revise their maps.

Neutral host operator OneWiFi also questioned the reliability of coverage representations based solely on predictive modelling.

The company said its experience working with regional communities and property developers showed that published coverage maps often failed to reflect “lived experience” on the ground.

In some cases, OneWiFi said developers had sought to deploy shared mobile infrastructure in areas with poor connectivity only to be told by mobile network operators that modelling indicated coverage already existed.

The company argued the credibility of the new standard would depend on whether maps accurately reflected the real experience of users.

It suggested that coverage maps should indicate whether predicted coverage has been validated through field measurements or crowdsourced data to improve transparency and trust.

“Showing the extent to which the predicted coverage has been verified by in-field measurement or crowd sourced data would assist the credibility of predictive mapping,” the submission said.

OneWiFi also suggested the possible addition of an “incidental” coverage category to describe highly uncertain coverage areas, while warning that too many classifications could create confusion.

Grahame Lynch

TIO urges stronger action on unfair trading practices in Treasury submission

The Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman has released its submission to federal Treasury on draft legislation amending the Australian Consumer Law to prohibit and strengthen protections against unfair trading practices, particularly those affecting subscription cancellations.

While broadly supporting the proposed prohibition on unfair trading practices, the TIO said further measures may be required to address conduct by providers that creates barriers for consumers seeking to cancel services.

“We want to see telcos’ cancellation processes become more transparent, accessible and consistent for consumers,” the TIO said.

To support enforcement of the proposed guardrails, the Ombudsman recommended the establishment of an independent dispute resolution mechanism to handle complaints, provide access to remedies against unfair practices and support compliance across affected sectors.

The TIO said more than 30% of complaints it receives relating to digital platforms involve fees and charges, including undisclosed subscription payments following the purchase of a digital product, ongoing charges after cancellation and significant barriers to cancelling services. It said it received 4,784 complaints last year concerning a provider’s failure to cancel a service.

“Our complaints and systemic investigations have revealed that some telcos have used trading practices which may be considered unfair, such as website design that makes it difficult to find key information about a product, unclear information about the pricing of products and retention practices that pressure consumers into signing up for new services when calling to cancel a contract,” the Ombudsman said.