

ATUG is pleased to introduce ATUG Focus – a way of making the best industry information available to members, on the topics of the moment.

For this first ATUG Focus, information has been provided by ATUG Industry Partner Market Clarity – a telecommunications analyst firm founded in January 2006. The Focus Topic is communications infrastructure availability.

Market Clarity uses databases of technical and market information to develop reports on technologies and services in the Australian market, with telecom infrastructure overlaid on population density or street maps.

Market Clarity's GIS tools and research databases enable the correlation and presentation of highly complex information in geographic (map) format.

Using these tools Market Clarity has mapped Australia's Networks in the newly released Australian Telecom Infrastructure Atlas 2009 - <http://www.marketclarity.com.au/research/telecom-atlas-2009.cfm>

At a time when there is much discussion about infrastructure and investment, the role for government and the need to contemplate change to the telecommunications regulatory framework, this Infrastructure Atlas provides a useful ground up picture of currently available telecommunications networks.

Detailed information on infrastructure is relevant to planning decisions by many different groups – from policy makers and regulators, to corporate and government end users, and industry players.

ATUG's focus on infrastructure is to ensure that investment in infrastructure is efficient and reflects both demand and investment objectives. An objective of infrastructure "at any cost" will wind up in unaffordable services for end users. An objective of infrastructure ahead of competition will wind up in unaffordable services for end users.

The Atlas is made up of 341 maps showing backhaul fibre, long-haul microwave, ADSL, SHDSL, and fixed wireless broadband infrastructure at national, state, and capital city inner and outer metropolitan levels.

Issues raised by access to such information include the importance of backhaul competition, the availability of broadband access technologies and the role of alternative broadband infrastructure such as power networks, road and rail corridors – all of which may have a role in supporting the development of the ubiquitous, affordable broadband that ATUG is seeking from the National Broadband Network process.

ATUG's concerns in the NBN process are reflected in our summary position on NBN Issues:

- **Policy Objectives** - the Long-term Interests of End Users and an effectively competitive services market place.

- **Affordability** is the key to take-up. Regulation must support the cost effective building of the NBN as well as recognise that effective competition is the strongest tool for delivering affordable prices. An entry level “safety-net” package should also be developed.
- **End User Choice** – network design is central to competition and choice. Only designs that promote competition should be accepted. When infrastructure competition is not possible, services competition based on open access and service equivalence at a wholesale level must be ensured.
- **Wholesale Service Equivalence** and effective services competition can only be assured by establishing:
  - clear separation between wholesale and retail units and
  - a new pro active, pro competition independent oversight body, NBN Australia, with the task of implementing the Open Access and Equivalence Frameworks
- **Customer Experience** in the NBN environment must be carefully managed to ensure a successful transition and good end user outcomes. Service quality and security standards must be established at a level to reflect the key role of the NBN in the lives of all Australians.
- **Ubiquity** – all Australians must be connected to the NBN. Ubiquity is not only about network availability but also about affordability and accessibility. When all Australians are connected to the NBN, the real potential of this for productivity, growth and innovation will be open to end users in every sector of the economy and community, and in all regions of Australia.

Detailed communications infrastructure information could encourage wider thinking in the greenfield projects contemplated under the Infrastructure Australia program. For example, fibre ducting could be considered as a sunk cost of other projects. The availability of ducting combined with an open access policy could greatly reduce the costs of bringing telecommunications infrastructure to regional communities. An example of this thinking is found in the approach by France to the development of broadband services for regional communities.

Prior to Market Clarity’s report the most recent Australia wide update on Infrastructure was the joint ACMA ACCC report **Communications Infrastructure and Services Availability in Australia 2007-2008** released in December 2007. This previous report is available at [http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC\\_311168](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_311168) .This report provides an overview but not great detail on communications infrastructure and service availability across Australia in residential and small business retail markets.

ATUG is hosting a discussion on 5<sup>th</sup> March in Sydney by J Scott Marcus, WIK-Consult Group on emerging issues in communications, including the costs of fibre deployment, new approaches to termination costs and developments in Internet policy issues – details are at <http://www.atug.com.au/WIKbfast.cfm>

ATUG is also holding its annual Update Conference – ATUG 2009 on 13<sup>th</sup> March which will include keynote addresses by the Minister, the ACCC, ACMA and updates on infrastructure and policy developments in New Zealand by TUANZ and the EU by the CMA UK. – details are at <http://www.atug.com.au/atug2009.cfm>