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Australian
Telecommunications
Users Group

Media Release

ATUG advises international visitors be mindful of mobile phone roaming charges during World Youth Day celebrations

World Youth Day (WYD) is set to attract over 125,000 international visitors to Sydney this month, and according to the organisers has become the largest single mobilisation of young people in the world. ATUG would like to take this opportunity to welcome pilgrims to Sydney and to advise our international visitors to make sure they are informed of the costs they will incur whilst roaming internationally on their mobile phones.

The thought of 125,000 youth, all with the latest mobile phones, including data capability and the costs they could incur probably isn't the first thought on most parents minds when their child travels internationally. They would firstly be concerned with a call home to know their child has arrived safely. The 'bill shock' they might receive a month later is usually an unwelcome surprise.

ATUG instead encourages WYD visitors to be informed of the charges they could incur and to consider work around solutions to keep in contact with loved ones over this period. An example of the costs a visitor from Italy could incur roaming in Australia and calling home ranges anywhere between 1.67 – 3 euros per minute. To receive a call from Mum or Dad in Italy whilst traveling in Australia, you could pay up to 2 euros per minute. The costs add up fast.

The international mobile roaming tariffs Australian users pay is high on ATUG's agenda for 2008 with a pending Parliamentary Inquiry following submissions from industry and users, due on 15 August. The reasons behind this action are clear when you consider the costs for an Australian user roaming in Italy and calling home could be anywhere up to \$5.60 per minute.

Around the world other Governments have tackled this issue head on – it's time that this happened in Australia. All the evidence suggests industry will not move to reduce these prices without strong action and ongoing monitoring by Government.

There is no legitimate reason why it costs end users many, many times more to make a call or send an SMS or access the web when they are traveling than when they are at home.

In a world where we have become reliant on these devices it's difficult to have them disconnected at a time when you need them the most.

For the time being ATUG encourages users to seek the detail on roaming pricing before switching their mobile phones on whilst abroad.

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About ATUG

ATUG is a not-for-profit membership-based organisation of Australian telecommunications users which has been working for better choice, value and services for telecommunications users since 1981. ATUG's initial goal of de-regulation of the telecommunications industry was achieved in 1997, when the new policy framework of open competition brought significant benefits to end-users. Since then, ATUG's mission has been to continue to represent the interests of users through ongoing debate on the effectiveness of telecommunications policies and to lobby hard for further change. www.atug.com.au