

Pages 1 to 2 of this document

have not been copied

as they are exempt in full

under section/s

§ 47C

and exempt in part under section

s. 22.

of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

Low Income Measures Assessment Committee

Short discussion starter paper on future of LIMAC and low income policy in Australia by Chris Dodds (Chairman), S 47F (Secretariat)

1. Background

- 1.1. Telecommunications take-up and usage has changed dramatically since 2002 with mobiles and Internet to the fore and fixed lines (the original focus of Access for Everyone) in steady decline.
- 1.2. Telecommunications markets have also changed dramatically with greatly increased number of service providers. The recent maturing of mobile and internet markets has put steep downward pressure on prices.

2. Strengths of LIMAC/ Access for Everyone

- 2.1. A comprehensive safety-net, so that no-one, no matter what their circumstances, need be excluded from having a basic communications service
- 2.2. Targeted solutions for different customer segments addressing both ongoing affordability (Pensioner Discount, HomeLine Budget, InContact, Centrepay) and short-term emergency relief (Bill Assistance, Sponsored Access, MessageBox, Phonecard/ PhoneAway card Assistance)
- 2.3. Based on a community partnership model with effective consultation and dialogue between the service provider and customer representatives with ongoing monitoring, market research and reporting at the highest level
- 2.4. Robust regulatory incentives, through a Licence Condition and Price Control Determination nexus.

3. Hallmarks of a better low income policy

- 3.1. Should explicitly recognise and support the role of modern communications services in improving social inclusion for all people on a low income
- 3.2. Should be competitively neutral, allowing consumers to choose their preferred service provider(s)
- 3.3. Should be technologically neutral, allowing consumers to choose their preferred telecommunications devices, networks and services

4. Some questions, thought starters

- 4.1. Currently, only PCC and SHC holders receive a Government benefit payment towards telecommunications usage (Telephone Allowance or Pensioner Supplement). Should this be extended to HCC holders as well?
- 4.2. Currently, only Telstra customers benefit from InContact™ as a basic home service. How can this form of safety-net be extended to all telecommunications consumers? Eg. could it be made a part of the Standard Telephone Service/ Universal Service arrangements commissioned and funded by the new USO Co or by NBN Co itself?

