Australia - Mobile Broadband - LTE and 5G

Description: The three LTE networks operated by Optus, Telstra and Vodafone have developed rapidly during the past two years as these players strive to provide an infrastructure capable of meeting customer demand for mobile broadband services. Telstra continues to be a global leader in mobile services, being a partner with Ericsson in developing 5G. The two companies have demonstrated 1Gb/s capabilities over a commercial LTE network using carrier aggregation technology, and will use the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Queensland to trial a range of technologies. Increasingly in an era leaning further to mobile data than voice, these networks must offer sufficient performance for customers. These developments have propelled Australia in global league tables, with the country having recorded the fastest peak mobile broadband speeds globally.

Since the beginning of 2015 Optus and Telstra have been able to utilise their 700MHz spectrum assets, with which they aim to provide about 98% population coverage by the end of 2016. Vodafone is relying on upgrades to its existing concessions, and provides about 95% coverage in metro areas. The auction of unused spectrum in the 1800MHz band in February 2016 will further improve the ability of MNOs to extend their LTE services. As a result of these developments the mobile market has seen a steady migration of subscribers from 3G to LTE.

Upgraded networks face daunting data demands from customers, many of whom make use of data-intensive graphics, videos and files shared across the networks. In addition, popular OTT services such as Netflix, a company which alone had attracted about five million customers by June 2016, provide streaming of content over mobile devices. While networks can at times be strained, the MNOs are continually adding capabilities and applications in an effort to reduce their overall costings. Customer preference for Wi-Fi from homes and workplaces has meant that mobile broadband traffic is largely offloaded to fixed-line infrastructure.

Progress by Australia’s mobile operators, together with high consumer demand, has meant that the country now has one of the highest proportions of LTE subscribers to overall mobile subscribers in the world. This report provides data and analysis on a range of mobile technologies in Australia, as well as an assessment of network developments. It also assesses the prospects for operators as they extend their LTE deployments beyond the major urban areas and deeper into rural areas. The report contains a range of valuable key statistics on network data throughput, operator strategies and emerging technologies.

Key developments:
Australia rated with the highest mobile broadband speed globally; Comms Alliance calls for flexibility in spectrum management; Kogan Mobile providing LTE on Vodafone’s network; growing number of MVNOs offering LTE services; Telstra and Ericsson to use Commonwealth Games to trial 5G capabilities; Telstra launches five-band carrier aggregation; Google’s Project Loon teams up with Telstra for LTE; mobile data traffic expected to grow six-fold to 2018; Telstra to close 2G network by 2016; Vodafone re-allocates existing 850MHz spectrum for LTE; MNOs trial VoLTE; Optus aiming for 98.5% population coverage with LTE by end-2016; Vodafone LTE reaches 95% metro population coverage; iiNet initiates LTE mobile plans; government encourages public engagement through mobile platform; Wi-Fi tethering among customers holds back growth in dedicated mobile broadband data cards; report includes recent market developments.

Companies mentioned in this report:
VHA, Vodafone, 3, Optus, Huawei, Telstra, Vividwireless, Ericsson, EnergyAustralia, SingTel, Unwired.

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