



Mobile data speeds boosted following spectrum restack

6 July, 2021– Mobile customers in some of Australia’s major cities have received a significant boost to their data speeds following the ‘restack’ of existing spectrum between TPG Telecom and Telstra.

The project involved the defragmentation of TPG Telecom and Telstra spectrum holdings within the 2100MHz and 1800MHz bands to achieve contiguous holdings for each of the two operators in Adelaide, Brisbane, Perth, Canberra, Darwin and Hobart.

Spectrum is needed to send and receive radio signals between a mobile or fixed wireless device and the network. When the spectrum holdings used in a mobile network are more adjoined or connected and less fragmented, the network is capable of offering higher data speeds to customers.

TPG Telecom Executive General Manager Mobile and Fixed Networks Barry Kezik said customers in these cities have experienced an immediate improvement in their mobile data speeds as a result of the restack.

“Since the spectrum restack, we have observed a 10 to 20 percent improvement in mobile data speeds, and traffic has increased significantly as customers take advantage of these faster speeds,” Mr Kezik said.

“We are continually looking at ways we can improve the customer experience across our mobile network.

“Ultimately, this is an example of two major telecommunications operators constructively working together to give customers improved services.

“This process also highlights how industry and the regulator can work together to achieve the most effective use of this valuable spectrum resource for the benefit of customers, and we acknowledge the valuable support of the ACMA throughout the process.”

Mr Kezik said spectrum for use in mobile networks is a limited resource the government allocates, usually via auction, to support the development of telecommunications networks. Spectrum licences permit the dedicated use of a given frequency in a geographic area.

“While contiguous spectrum is a goal of the industry, sometimes operators have spectrum holdings that are split into two or more fragments within a frequency band. Successive spectrum allocations over a number of years has been a reason for this,” Mr Kezik said

“For example, new allocations in 2016 and 2017 made contiguity hard to achieve automatically, and required an additional step through the recently completed restack.

“As we refarm spectrum gradually from 4G to 5G over the coming years, there will be additional performance benefits to harness.”

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Background:

Radio spectrum is the allocated range of electromagnetic frequencies used by mobile and fixed wireless devices, and the network that they communicate via.

As spectrum is necessary to carry customer traffic across networks, the more contiguous the spectrum bands are that a network makes use of, the more efficiently it can be used with resulting user data speeds improving – both for user uploads and downloads.

A spectrum restack allows for the defragmentation of existing spectrum holdings to create a single contiguous holding for any operator, for a specific frequency band.

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