# Ensuring communications markets are working well for businesses and other organisations

## Overview

Businesses\* communications needs are specialised, with a greater focus on reliability and service performance and coverage than residential consumers. Businesses rely on communications services to function and an outage or ineffective service can have significant financial and/or productivity impacts.

Like residential consumers, businesses are using more data and more devices to communicate. The growing digital economy is driving productivity improvements by facilitating greater connectivity for businesses and enhancing internal and external communications. As communications technology continues to develop and next generation networks are rolled out, including the National Broadband Network (NBN), businesses will have more opportunities to innovate and improve business operations by lowering costs and better meeting changing consumer preferences. For example, businesses have access to a growing variety of services such as cloud services (e.g. private and virtual private cloud services including infrastructure, storage, back-up), hosting and data centre services, mobile services, network services, and new hardware and software products.

We recognise that businesses face unique challenges and often require tailored communications solutions, which may not always be available or easily accessible. We are interested to ensure that competitive markets enable business customers to take advantage of, and benefit from, current and future technological developments in the communications sector.

## What are we doing?

Our role is to ensure that communications markets are competitive and working well for all consumers, including businesses. More competition means a greater choice of suitable services and products at competitive prices and more options when selecting a service provider. We are particularly interested to understand how well competition is meeting the needs of small and medium enterprises, but also whether there are any issues associated with the supply of services to large business and government consumers.

We are undertaking a market study to consider how the Australian communications sector is changing and to identify whether competition is working effectively and producing good outcomes for consumers, including businesses. We are also looking to identify whether there are any issues or potential issues arising that could lessen competition and negatively impact consumers, including businesses.

In particular, we are seeking to better understand:

* the varying communications needs of businesses and whether these are currently being met by the services and products on offer in the market
* whether these needs will change over the next five years and if so, how (e.g. the potential need for more flexibility or mobility in services/products, more video conferencing/data intensive activities)
* the communication products and services businesses are currently using and what products or services might become increasingly important or critical to business operations over the next five years (e.g. use of VoIP phones or mobile phones only, use of fixed-line, wireless or mobile broadband)
* businesses’ expectations about new fixed-line next generation network services, such as the NBN and other superfast broadband networks, and will these meet future needs (e.g. faster (symmetrical) speeds, service levels, larger data allowances, flexibility, improved reliability, competitive pricing, dedicated networks)
* businesses expectations about developments in mobile services, such as greater coverage of 4G and future introduction of 5G and how this could impact business operations (e.g. faster services, larger data allowances, cheaper mobile services, greater use of services and devices)
* if there are any compatibility issues that could limit choice of provider or service, for example, in regards to hardware, software, operating systems and/or network systems, or limit the ability to switch providers in the future
* the information available to businesses about communications products and services and whether this is accurate, easily comprehensible and comparable, readily available and sufficient to make informed decisions
* what leads to businesses changing service providers and whether there are any costs involved in switching service providers which limit the extent to which this occurs
* if businesses have access to bundle offerings, similar to those offered to residential consumers, that are tailored to their individual needs and price competitive and if so, whether these are easily comparable across different providers
* if there are any barriers or impediments to businesses accessing suitable communications products or services, such as insufficient choice, unaffordable products or services, complex or ambiguous information
* if there any other issues experienced in accessing communications services or products or anticipated future issues.

## What do you think?

If you would like to participate in the market study, we encourage you to make a submission or respond to the business consumer questions available on the ACCC Consultation Hub by **Friday 14 October 2016**.

Alternatively, if you would like to raise a different issue/concern or would like to be kept up to date on the market study findings, please send us an email at commsmarketstudy@accc.gov.au

You can also follow the ACCC on Twitter and LinkedIn for updates.

## Further information

If you have a complaint or enquiry about a specific communications service or product, please contact the [ACCC Infocentre](https://www.accc.gov.au/contact-us/contact-the-accc) or the [Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman](https://www.tio.com.au/making-a-complaint).

\* for the purposes of this market study consultation, we are focusing on the views of small and medium enterprise customers who consume communications products and services, however, we are also interested in any concerns or issues that large business or government customers may have.