

Review of ICT Statistics

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Department of Communications



**Australian Mobile
Telecommunications
Association**

AMTA Submission

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Background

The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) is the peak industry body representing Australia's mobile telecommunications industry. Its mission is to promote an environmentally, socially and economically responsible, successful and sustainable mobile telecommunications industry in Australia. Its members include mobile Carriage Service Providers (CSPs), handset manufacturers, network equipment suppliers, retail outlets and other suppliers to the industry. For more details about AMTA, see www.amta.org.au.

Introduction

AMTA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Review of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Statistics by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and Department of Communications (DoC).

The mobile telecommunications industry makes a significant contribution to Australia's economy. An AMTA commissioned report by Deloitte Access Economics found that the total value added to the economy by the mobile industry was \$14.1 billion (for 2011-12) with \$7.6 billion direct contribution and \$65 billion indirect activity across the economy.¹ More recently an Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) commissioned report concluded that in 2013 mobile broadband led to an estimated increase in Australia's economic activity of \$33.8 billion.²

The ACMA report also found that the capacity of the mobile sector to enable more productivity growth means that technological developments in the sector and their diffusion throughout the economy have the potential to reverse Australia's declining productivity performance. The Deloitte Access Economics report predicted a productivity benefit of \$11.8 billion over the period to 2025 from mobile technologies.³

It is therefore important that ICT statistics collected by Government agencies reflect the enabling role of mobile telecommunications in the economy so that Governments can make well-considered policy decisions for this sector on the basis of reliable, timely and relevant information.

¹ [Mobile Nation](#) Deloitte Access Economics, Feb 2013

² [The economic impacts of mobile broadband on the Australian economy, from 2006 to 2013](#), Research report prepared for the ACMA by The Centre for International Economics, April 2014

³ [Mobile Nation](#) Deloitte Access Economics, Feb 2013

Finally, quality data is fundamental for informing good public policy decision-making. AMTA suggests that the collection, availability, and co-ordination of research and data collection programs across Government agencies could be improved in relation to ICT statistics to better inform policy-makers. For example, ICT statistics are collected by agencies such as the ACMA and Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) as well as the ABS, however, there is a lack of co-ordination and consolidation of research and no standardisation of definitions used between the various agencies.

Gaps in the current collection and availability of data

AMTA points out the following gaps in the collection and availability of ABS data:

- there is no stand-alone category for mobile or broadband services in the current collection of ABS statistics
- ICT spending is not separated into hardware, software, services and communications and it does not capture emerging categories e.g. cloud computing
- ICT spending is not available as a proportion of capex/opex budgets.

Suggested additional data collection

AMTA manages [MobileMuster](#) which is the Australian mobile phone industry's official product stewardship program. It is a not-for-profit, Government accredited, national recycling program for mobile phones.

It would be useful for industry members who fund and voluntarily participate in the MobileMuster program to have available statistics in relation to:

- Number of unused/stored mobile phones or mobile devices people have
- How people intend to dispose of or recycle their old mobile phones/devices

Quality of existing reports

AMTA suggests that the quality of existing reports could be enhanced by:

- providing more detailed market segment information e.g. large business is categorised as 200+ employees which is too broad
- including Government as an industry segment
- providing greater geographic granularity in data for consumer and small business ICT services (e.g. to postcode level) as this would greatly assist policymakers, national telecommunications companies and the wider community to understand differences in consumers' telecommunications needs, given that these markets are likely to vary by geographic area.

Consolidation of industry reporting

AMTA believes it would be more prudent and potentially reduce the burden of regulation if the ACCC's telecommunications price index methodologies were reviewed as part of this ICT Statistics Review, and then consolidated into the ABS' collection of statistics.

AMTA notes the ABS' increasing focus on statistical geography. The provision of telecommunications infrastructure has been a core area of interest for the community and the Australian Government (as evidenced by the National Broadband Network and the Mobile Black Spots Programme). The ACCC

and the ACMA collect infrastructure data from a range of carriers. In the case of mobile carriers, the information collected augments information in the public domain (e.g., AMTA's Radio Frequency National Site Archive or the ACMA's Register of Radiocommunications Licences). As part of this Review, it would be timely to consider whether the burden of these regulatory reporting requirements remains justified and, if so, whether some of this information can be more usefully and efficiently be collected by the ABS or compiled from other public sources.

Timeliness of data

The timely release of data is always desirable, particularly with regard to the pace of change in the mobile telecommunications sector. The utility and relevance of ICT data would be greatly enhanced if core data sets were collected quarterly and the ABS released its public reports within 6 weeks of each quarter's end. In addition to the core data sets, the ABS should undertake an annual telecommunications survey that provides deeper insights into consumers' demand for, and use of technology, and changes in the technologies used to deliver these services to customers.

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