

TELECOMMUNICATIONS NUMBERING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Availability of Subscribers Numbers to 3G Mobile Services

Introduction

At the 37th meeting held on June 2000, it was agreed that an alert mechanism should be set up to monitor the consumption of level “6” numbers. It was also agreed that, if mobile numbers from “601-629” were used up, then OFTA and operators would urgently conduct a review to see whether the number consumption rate would affect the availability of numbers for the upcoming 3G mobile services.

2. OFTA has monitored the consumption rate of the level “6” numbers and prepared a graph which shows the consumption since July 2000 at Annex A. The graph also indicates the predicted consumption rate for the coming months. According to our prediction, it is estimated that numbers at “601 – 629” number levels would be used up by the end of this year.

3. The Government had announced "The Licensing Framework for Third Generation Mobile Services" in February 2001 that 3G mobile network operators should open at least 30% of their network capacity for access by non-affiliated Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNOs) and/or content providers. There is a need to assign subscriber numbers under the leading digit "6" or "9" to both 3G mobile network operators and MVNOs.

TA's Considerations

4. Having considered the existing consumption rates of mobile numbers by the 2G mobile network operators and the assignment of subscriber numbers to both 3G mobile network operators and MVNOs, the Telecommunications Authority (TA) is concerned that there would not be sufficient spare capacity of subscriber numbers to cater for the growth of the mobile market in Hong Kong.

5. At the number level “6”, sub-levels “66” and “69” are reserved for the future migration to longer digit length of mobile numbers. In addition, six number blocks have been reserved for the proposed Special Number Arrangement. Under this

circumstance, there would only be 44 number blocks or 4.4 million numbers available to mobile services when the “62” number level is used up. The TA is concerned that there would not be sufficient capacity of subscriber number to support the operation of the incumbent 2G mobile network operators, the future 3G mobile network operators and MVNOs.

TA’s Preliminary Proposal

6. To support the operation and growth of the 3G mobile network operators and MVNOs, it is necessary to reserve sufficient subscriber numbers to them. The incumbent operators are now operating at a number utilization rate of 60%, which is the criteria laid down in the Code of Practice relating to the Use of Numbers and Codes in the Hong Kong Numbering Plan for applying new number blocks. Using 60% as the approximate number utilization rates of all the mobile network operators, the spare number capacity of the existing mobile network operators are shown in Annex B.

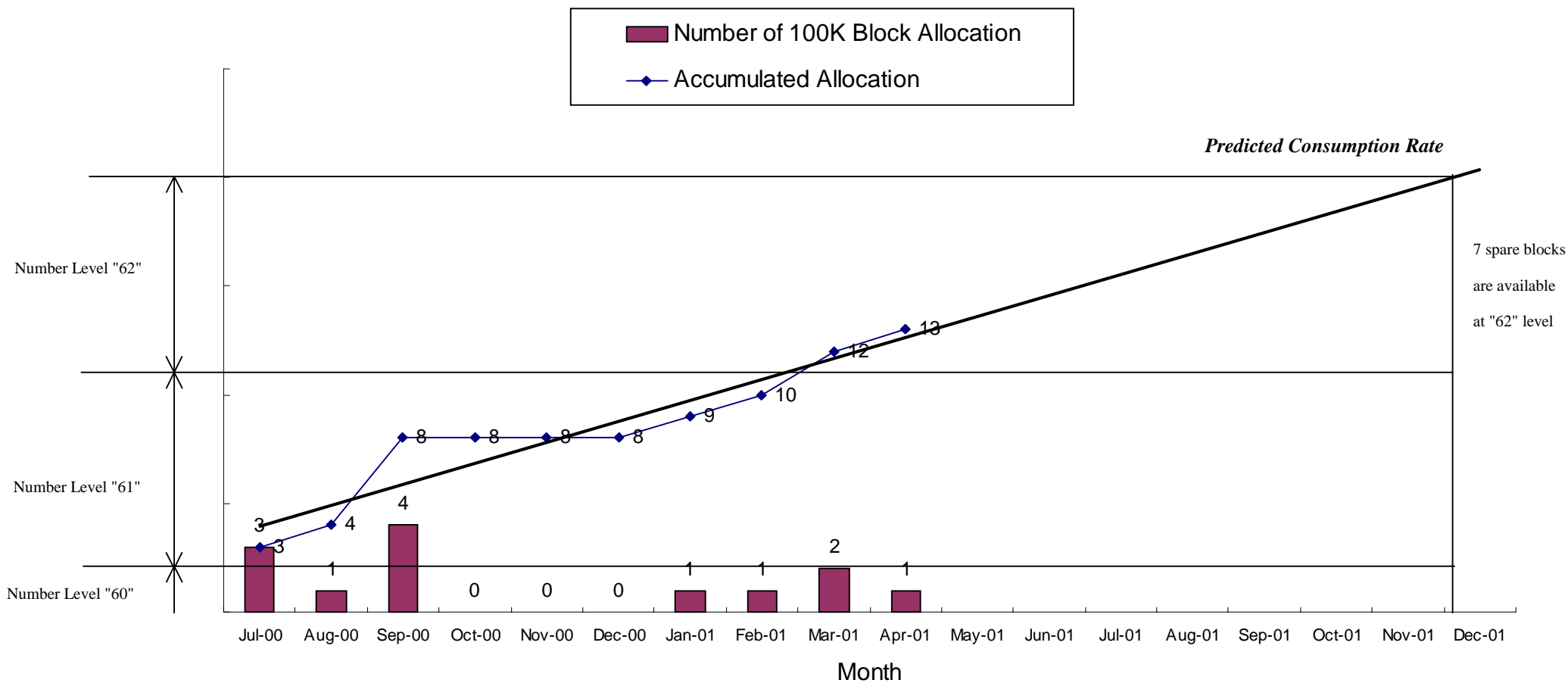
7. Noting that the incumbent operators are effectively holding a large amount of spare number to support their existing operation, the TA intends to either reserve all the numbers in the number levels “63”, “64”, “65”, “67” and “68” to the future 3G operators (including the MVNOs) or raise the existing utilisation rate of 2G mobile network operators from 60% to above 80% in order that they would better utilise the existing allocated number blocks before requesting the TA to allocate additional ones.

Advice Sought

8. Members are invited to give their views and comments on this TA’s proposal and/or suggest any alternative options on this issue.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority
14 May 2001

Mobile Number Block Allocation as of April 2001



Unused Numbering Capacity of Existing Mobile Network Operators

Operator	Number capacity allocated	Unused capacity (assumed 60% utilization)
Hong Kong CSL	2,250,000	900,000
Hutchison Telecom	2,700,000	1,080,00
SmarTone Mobile	2,100,000	840,000
Sunday	800,000	320,000
New World PCS	1,100,000	440,000
Peoples Telephone	900,000	360,000