

TELECOMMUNICATIONS NUMBERING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Review of Personal Number Resource

Purpose

Personal numbering service provides its user with a personal number, which may be call forwarded, under the control of the user, to any number that can reach the user. This paper offers a brief review on the number resource available for personal numbering service, covering the considerations for releasing existing reserved number blocks versus opening up new number levels for forthcoming applications.

Background

2. According to the Hong Kong Numbering Plan, the number levels "81-89" are allocated for personal numbering service. The number levels "81", "82" and "83" were opened up for allocation to PCCW-HKT Telephone Limited (PCCW-HKT), New World Telecommunications Limited (NWT), Wharf T&T Limited (WT&T) and Hutchison Global Communications Limited (HGC) in 1995. Each of these four operators was allocated three blocks of personal numbers (each comprising 100,000 numbers). In addition, another three blocks of personal numbers have been reserved for each of them since 1995 to facilitate their personal numbering service expansion. There were also three blocks ("8X8" number blocks) reserved as special numbers. So far, the four operators have not applied for activation of the reserved number blocks for the provision of personal numbering service.

3. Following the liberalisation of the Fixed Telecommunications Network Services (FTNS) market, two personal number blocks ("814" and "834") in the opened number levels were allocated to a new FTNS operator, Hong Kong Broadband Network Limited (HKBN). As a result, out of the 30 number blocks in the opened number levels, 14 are allocated to five FTNS operators, 12 are reserved for four FTNS operators and 3 are reserved as special numbers, leaving only 1 vacant number block available for forthcoming allocation. Given the 12 reserved personal number blocks have been left

unused since 1995, there is a need to review this situation and to consider the means to meet new demands.

Consultation

4. In considering whether to open up new number levels for personal numbering services to cope with the demand, there is a need to assess whether the current number resource allocated to the industry are being utilised in an efficient and effective manner. A consultation on this issue was conducted in June 2003 to solicit the views of NAC members. There were responses from some FTNS operators and a mobile operator on behalf of the mobile industry sector.

5. HKBN noted that the last vacant number block in the opened number levels was "824", while number blocks "8x4" that might be perceived by some as unfavourable had never been allocated to other FTNS operators before except HKBN. HKBN was of view that the 12 number blocks reserved since 1995 for the four FTNS operators should be reviewed for the sake of fair and equitable treatment to all FTNS operators, and considered for release as such number resource has never been put to actual use over the years. HKBN considered the opening up of additional number levels for personal numbering service unnecessary at the current stage.

6. The other FTNS operators had different views. WT&T and NWT both suggested opening up of additional number levels instead of releasing the reserved number blocks to meet new demands, on the grounds that their reserved resource would be utilised shortly. HGC was of the view that the reserved number blocks should only be considered for release after allocation of the last vacant block. WT&T and HGC also considered that if the reserved number blocks were to be released, the four FTNS operator should each be required to release one block only.

7. The mobile operators considered that the existing utilisation of personal number resource was low and therefore reserved number blocks rather than new number levels should be utilised to meet the new demands. The mobile operators considered that the offer of personal numbering service should not be restricted to FTNS operators. They further suggested that the number levels "84" to "89", which are currently planned for personal numbering service, should be released for other purposes like mobile telephone

service.

Considerations

8. Given that there are ample reserved and vacant number blocks in the opened number levels "81" "82" and "83", priority should be accorded to utilising such number blocks to meet new demands of personal numbering service. As the 12 reserved number blocks for the four FTNS operators have not been activated for allocation over the last 8 years, such reservation should be reviewed to see if they can be released, either in part or in full, to meet the demand.

9. As regards the proposed deployment of "84" to "89" number range to other services, it has been discussed in the 47th NAC meeting and considered that, as the number range is the only available spare consecutive number range, its alternative use may cater for future requirement of all new services. In considering the scarcity of number resource and the potential applications of level "8" numbers for service other than personal numbering service, it is considered that new "8X" number levels should only be made available for personal numbering service upon consumption of all the "81", "82" and "83" number blocks.

Advice Sought

10. Members are invited to give their views and comments concerning the number resource for personal numbering service.

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