

28 March 2013

Ms Sophie Dunstone
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Dunstone

Inquiry into feasibility of a prohibition on the charging of fees for an unlisted (silent) number service

Optus appreciates the Committee's invitation to make a short submission on the above topic.

In Optus' response to the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) inquiry into Australian privacy law and practice in 2007, Optus supported an amendment to the *Telecommunications Act 1997* to prohibit the charging of a fee for an unlisted (silent) number on the public number directory. Our views have not changed, and we continue to support the free provision of unlisted numbers.

Given that mobile numbers are unlisted by default – with no charge to the customer, we believe the requirement for fixed line customers to pay for an unlisted number is outdated, and not reflective of the current telecommunications environment and the increasing use of mobile phones.

In its submission to the Australian Communications and Media Authority on the Draft IPND Standard, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner queried "whether it is appropriate for individuals to be expected to pay for the right to make privacy choices"¹. Optus takes the view that they should not.

Optus does not charge its customers for silent numbers, however does pass on the Telstra charge to customers of its Local Access Resale fixed line service (which is a Telstra service re-sold by Optus). If Telstra were to waive the charges, Optus would not pass them on to these customers.

We therefore recommend that the Committee consider supporting the earlier ALRC proposal to amend the *Telecommunications Act 1997* to prohibit the charging of a fee for an unlisted (silent) number on a public number directory.

Yours sincerely

David Epstein
Vice President, Corporate & Regulatory Affairs

¹ Paragraph 72.239 of the ALRC Report.

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