

Telecommunications Environment of Fiji

Fiji's telecommunications infrastructure is on par with that of developed countries. For international telecommunications, Fiji is directly linked to the Southern Cross Cable Network (SCCN), a third generation submarine fibre optic cable system with direct links to Australia, New Zealand and the US West Coast via Hawaii. Domestic telecommunications technologies available are satellite (VSAT), wireless (WiMax, CDMA and 3G), optical fibre and the traditional copper (ADSL).

Fiji's Telecommunications Statistics (2009)

- Telephone penetration rate - 14.0 per 100 population
- Cellular mobile connections - 700,000 (Fiji's population – 869,000 in 2007)
- Internet bandwidth capacity - 620Mbps
- Internet Service Providers – 3
- Mobile Network Operators – 2
- Mobile Virtual Network Operator – 1
- Fixed line operator – 1
- International Operator - 1
- IP licensed providers - 5

At the beginning of 1990, the old Telecommunications Department was replaced by Fiji Posts and Telecommunications Ltd, a private company wholly owned by Government. International telecommunications is operated by Fiji International Telecommunications Limited (FINTEL), a joint venture between Cable and Wireless (49%) and Government (51%).

Amalgamated Telecom Holdings (ATH) is Fiji's principal telecommunications holding company with main activities being in the provision of local, national (trunk) and mobile telephony and internet and data related services. ATH's major shareholder is the Fiji National Provident Fund (FNPF) with 58.2 percent, the Government of Fiji (34.6 percent) and other institutional and individual investors (7.2 percent).

Mobile phones are proving to be a very popular medium of communication in the country. The mobile phone customer number has grown to 700,000 at the beginning of 2009.

Telecommunications Regulatory Unit, now Department of Communications in the Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Trade and Communications, was established in 1990. Whilst generally the unit performs the functions and responsibilities of radio frequency spectrum management it is also responsible for –

□ development of national plans and policies on the utilisation of the radio frequency spectrum which ensures the employment of the best combination of telecommunication systems in the sector to meet the needs that have been identified.



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- development of national positions on key spectrum issues of interest coordinated with national policies and plans, and national position on issues of common interest at a regional and international level.
- co-ordination of all proposed radio frequency assignments with regard to existing assignments on a national, regional and international basis.
- application of the national policies, legislation, regulations and procedures governing telecommunications and radio communications.
- stipulation and enforcement of technical regulations on operations in the sector.
- development and application of standards and procedures for approved customer premises equipment.
- development, establishment and maintenance of a database and necessary statistical technical and operational information for the proper management of resources handled by the Unit.

The Department also exists primarily to be responsible for and to ensure that the duties, functions and responsibilities of the Minister for Communications are satisfactorily carried out, which duties, functions and responsibilities are enumerated in the Posts and Telecommunications Decree 1989 and the Television Decree 1992.

Telecommunications Market Liberalisation

Government and the Industry have signed a Deed that outlines the perspectives of liberalization in the Fiji telecommunications and ICT markets.

Both Government and the Industry have also agreed to the bringing into effect of a new legislation for telecommunications, the Telecommunications Promulgation 2008. The new law establishes the new regulator, Telecommunications Authority of Fiji (TAF), to administer in the regulating of the liberalized telecommunications and ICT markets. TAF will primarily be responsible for licensing of provision of telecommunications services and the management of the radio frequency spectrum and national telephone numbering.

It is expected that the change from exclusivity to a partial deregulation and then a full deregulated and liberalized sector will attract new investments and businesses and create new employment opportunities. Potential areas of growth expected include cellular mobile services, VoIP (IP telephony) services, ISPs, IP and broadband services.

Fiji's telecommunications market will be fully deregulated from July 2009.



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Information Communication Technology

This government is supportive of initiatives to develop Fiji's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry given its potential of being Fiji's new growth industry. The age of information technology has proved that isolation is no longer a constraint to our pursuit of economic development. Government recognises the infrastructure capacity via the Southern Cross Cable Network provides the impetus for "bridging the digital divide" and optimising our opportunity as the hub for information and communication transmission not only for Fiji, but the Pacific as well. Fiji has also begun to take bold steps towards attracting investments in the IT sector, with the main focus on BPO (Back Office Processing)/Call Centre businesses.

Compared to other South Pacific countries, Fiji has rapidly penetrated into the electronic age. E-Mail, Website and Internet have become our daily means of communication. The ICT Association of Fiji has been set up comprising personnel from Government, private sector and educational institutes. The objectives of the Association are to encourage, facilitate and support the development of the ICT industry. Competitive telecommunication rates and skills development are essential for the growth of the ICT industry. It is encouraging to note that back office operations have already created over 500 new jobs. And Government has already committed towards an E-Government development project to enhance efficiency within the public service.



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