

TELSTRA REPORT IN RESPONSE TO
RECOMMENDATION 2.5 OF THE REGIONAL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS INQUIRY

Improving co-ordination of new service connections
involving contractors

Table of Contents

1. IMPROVED NEW SERVICE CONNECTIONS 3

2. THE BENEFITS OF PRE-PROVISIONING 3

3. IMPROVED COMMUNICATION WITH CONTRACTORS 4

4. IMPROVED CUSTOMER INFORMATION 4

5. EXPANDED CONTRACTOR RESPONSIBILITY 5

6. CONTRACTOR PERFORMANCE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS 5

7. IT SUPPORT..... 6

8. MONITORING THE NEED FOR FURTHER CHANGES..... 6

1. Improved New Service Connections

Telstra has introduced an improved service for customers to have their phone connected when they move into a newly constructed residence.

The new processes are designed to improve the provision of new service connections by Telstra and its authorised contractors, including better coordination and regular audits to ensure all work meets Telstra's high standards.

The key change is that contractors now have end-to-end responsibility for providing all necessary cabling to newly constructed residences before the customer moves in. This type of cabling work is known as 'pre-provisioning' and it involves working with builders or customers from start to finish. Previously, Telstra and a contractor undertook work on different parts of the service, which opened up the potential for gaps in service delivery.

Communication between Telstra and its contractors has also been improved. Information about the pre-provisioning arrangements for new residences is being better promoted to customers and builders, particularly the benefits of notifying Telstra and its contractors as early as possible about the construction of new residences.

Individual jobs and the overall impact of these improved processes will be monitored by a new IT system developed by Telstra.

The new arrangements are in line with a recommendation of the Regional Telecommunications (Estens) Inquiry that Telstra report to the Government on the outcomes of its project to improve the coordination of new service connections and that such changes be monitored to determine the need for any follow up action. Telstra presented an initial report to the Government and the Australian Communications Authority (ACA) in April this year, with a final report provided in September.

2. The Benefits of Pre-Provisioning

Providing most new telephone services requires trenching, installation of a lead-in cable (the cable that connects the house to the street cabling), and internal wiring to the first telephone socket in the residence. This work is best done while the residence is still being built because it is generally more difficult to install cabling once construction is completed.

Installation of telephone cabling at the time of construction means that when the customer moves in:

- Delays in obtaining telephone services will be minimised, as all the cabling

will already be in place, allowing the service to be provided when they ask for it to be connected; and

- Connections can be made simply by calling Telstra on 13 22 00 or making arrangements online at www.telstra.com.au/movinghome.

If cabling is not installed at the construction stage, it is sometimes necessary to make alterations to walls and fittings so the phone sockets can be placed where the customer wants them.

In most cases, the customer would be required to have a trench dug for the lead-in cable. This is best done at the time of construction so that it does not interfere with landscaping or other improvements.

3. Improved Communication with Contractors

Under Telstra's improved processes, contractors now receive regular information bulletins on new and changed arrangements, and specific actions required, including process changes and completion dates.

Specialist staff from Telstra and its contractors now look after all pre-provisioning cable work. This includes managing day-to-day issues, escalating those that cannot be resolved at the local level and developing and implementing process improvements.

Representatives from Telstra and its contractors meet fortnightly to ensure a high level of performance and compliance by contractors.

An improved process is in place for issues to be escalated, including a single contact point for all Telstra regional staff and contractors to resolve issues. This is supported by a new IT system accessible by Telstra and contractor staff.

4. Improved Customer Information

Telstra has developed a brochure to inform customers about obtaining new service connections to premises where a service has not previously existed.

The "Building a New Home" brochure explains the benefits to customers and builders of advising Telstra early of the construction of a new residence; and provides details on lead-in trenching and cabling, internal wiring and socket work and how to contact Telstra to have the service connected when required. The brochure is available at Telstra Country Wide offices and online at http://www.telstra.com.au/movinghome/pdf/new_home.pdf.

Telstra has also revised its standard pre-provisioning customer letter to better explain the steps to be followed in the pre-provisioning process and the benefits of this approach.

5. Expanded Contractor Responsibility

Telstra's contractors are now responsible for providing all the necessary cabling and related contact with the builder or customer from the time of receiving notice through to completion of the job.

The job is completed when the contractor provides Soft Dial Tone to the first socket in the residence. Soft Dial Tone allows a customer to contact Telstra to ask for the service to be connected or contact emergency services by dialling 000 once a handset is plugged into the socket. It cannot be used to make or receive other calls until the customer places an order for the service to be connected.

The contractor is now the single point of contact for the builder or person requesting the cabling work to be done, including the pre-provisioning of Soft Dial Tone. This means work is better co-ordinated and builders or customers can revise or obtain information regarding their requests through one point of contact.

6. Improved Contractor Performance Monitoring Arrangements

Telstra has put in place improved monitoring arrangements to ensure that contractors are adopting the changed processes and that the quality of work being undertaken meets Telstra's high standards.

The two levels of audits that now apply are:

- Nationally coordinated/region-based process quality audits conducted at six monthly intervals; and
- Random product inspection audits that focus on the standard of work undertaken by contractors. The random, and sometimes spot, audits cover approximately 10% of all contractor activity.

Contractors must demonstrate they have taken action to correct any part of the process that does not meet audit requirements.

A set of detailed procedures is now distributed to all contractors and regularly updated. Contractors are advised of ad hoc requirements and changes through regular information bulletins and correspondence from Telstra.

The new audit arrangements, along with the continued and structured communication channels in operation between contractors, Telstra, the customer and the building industry, are designed to foster continuing improvement in the pre-provisioning process.

7. IT Support

To support the pre-provisioning process, Telstra has developed Smart-Provisioning, a new IT system that provides a real-time link between Telstra and its contractors.

The SMART-Provisioning system was trialed in country Queensland and has been operating across Australia since July 2003. All contractor data has been migrated to SMART-Provisioning and relevant contractor and Telstra staff have been trained to use the system.

SMART-Provisioning features include:

- More than 700 users from both Telstra and its contractors, enabling large numbers of users to access the system at any one time.
- Work records are visible from the time the request is lodged to completion of the pre-provisioning work and payment of the contractor by Telstra.
- Data is accepted from AXIS (Telstra's core system for processing new service connection orders) and other systems used to manage network build projects. This enables contractors to have full visibility of other work required to provide Soft Dial Tone to the residence.
- A full picture is provided of time, date, user and database activity for both Telstra and its contractors to use in managing work orders.
- Pre-provisioning steps and activities can be traced and measured, improving communication while work is in progress.

8. Monitoring the Need for Further Change

Telstra has outlined the new monitoring arrangements to the ACA and has provided copies of audit checklists used as part of the processes.

Telstra has recommended to the ACA that the outcomes of these audits be used as the basis for determining whether there is a need for further action to improve processes. This would include providing the ACA with access to the most recent audits from about April 2003, as well as the next set of audits scheduled for early 2004.

Telstra is looking to use the recently deployed SMART-Provisioning system as a basis for measuring performance improvements. Telstra is discussing with the ACA whether these measures can be used in monitoring process changes and overall improvements in connecting services when customers move into new premises.