Best Effort.

The weekday briefing on Australian telecommunications, data centres and AI infrastructure.

TODAY'S BRIEFING

Tuesday 10 November 2026

- Copper thieves cut NBN fibre at the Bridgewater–Gagebrook bridge on Friday 6 November 2026, taking about 1,350 Tasmanian customers offline, with full restoration expected between 6pm and 8pm on Saturday 7 November.
- NBN Co will also drop its plan-speed rule for FTTN fibre upgrades from 31 March 2027.
- Telstra will begin enabling RCS messaging on 16 November, Android first.

11 stories · **19 min** reading · **18** sources · Online at besteffort.au/editions/2026-11-10

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CARRIERS & NETWORKS 1 OF 11

NBN Co to lift plan-speed rule for FTTN fibre upgrades from 31 March 2027

NBN Co announced on 30 September 2026 that from 31 March 2027 eligible Fibre to the Node homes will be able to move to full fibre whatever plan they are on. A separate Targeted Upgrade program is due to start sending notices to selected copper properties from July 2027.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Dropping the plan-speed condition removes a commercial hurdle for moving FTTN customers to fibre, which is relevant to retail providers selling lower-tier plans and to the wider move away from copper. Combined with the Targeted Upgrade program, it sets out a timetable for copper households from 2027.

NBN Co announced on 30 September 2026 that eligible Fibre to the Node (FTTN) homes will be able to get a full fibre upgrade from 31 March 2027 without first signing up to a faster plan. Onya Magazine reported that many households currently need a plan on a wholesale tier of 100/40 Mbps or above to qualify. After the change, a household's current plan will not determine eligibility, so someone on a 50 Mbps plan could move to fibre without paying for a quicker tier, provided the address qualifies.

FTTN carries fibre to a node in the street and then uses copper to reach the home, whereas Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) is fibre all the way to the property. CHOICE reported that FTTN and Fibre to the Curb connections top out at 100Mbps download, while FTTP and HFC now reach 2000Mbps. CHOICE said customers on those copper technologies may be able to switch to fibre at no extra cost, and that the NBN address checker shows whether an upgrade is offered at a given address. It added that installation charges may apply, although retail providers regularly run free FTTP upgrade offers.

NBN Co said the fault rate on full fibre was 12 per cent lower than on FTTN between July 2025 and June 2026, and noted that this is a network-wide measure. It also said more than 1.5 million homes and businesses have already moved to fibre, and that full fibre makes up around 39 per cent of connections.

A second initiative will move some copper customers regardless of choice. NBN Co announced the Targeted Upgrade program in April 2026 to shift selected homes and businesses from older copper connections to full fibre. NBN Co said about 130,000 properties will be covered in the first year, with the first notices going out from July 2027. Selected customers are to receive several notices, can extend or defer, and get additional support, and can usually keep their existing

speed plan. NBN Co said suspending a copper service would be a last resort, with the first suspensions not expected until January 2028.

On upgrade day a technician runs fibre to the property and fits an NBN connection box indoors, and sometimes a utility box outside. A standard job typically takes a few hours. Customers still need a compatible modem or router, and renters need the landlord's approval because the work can involve drilling into a wall. Households already on a qualifying plan at an eligible address can upgrade now rather than wait until March.

REPORTING FROM

1 **CHOICE** · NBN speed upgrades: Your complete guide

2 **Onya Magazine** · The NBN Fibre Upgrade Is Getting Easier For Copper Homes In 2027

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 2 OF 11

ACMA targets early 2028 for AFC-controlled standard-power 6 GHz Wi-Fi

ACMA wants accredited automatic frequency coordination systems running standard-power outdoor Wi-Fi in 5925–6585 MHz by early 2028. Consultation on the proposal closes on 18 December 2026.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

A fixed timetable gives mines, campuses and wireless internet providers a path to coordinated standard-power outdoor Wi-Fi, and signals to equipment makers that AFC connectivity and geolocation features may be needed for the Australian market, while mobile operators are pressing on interference and 6G spectrum.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority wants accredited, AFC-controlled standard-power outdoor Wi-Fi operating in the 5925–6585 MHz band by early 2028, according to a consultation document, Telecom Gazette reported. That would make Australia the fourth market with a commercial 6 GHz automatic frequency coordination system, Telecom Gazette said. The consultation opened on 16 October 2026 and comments are due by 5:00 PM AEDT on 18 December 2026.

ACMA plans to publish a variation of the Low Interference Potential Device class licence and accreditation arrangements in the third quarter of 2027, with the final proposal following between the fourth quarter of 2027 and the first quarter of 2028. ACMA said it expects AFC deployment can begin at that point, "enabling accredited AFC system providers to deploy services within the established framework". The schedule is indicative and subject to consultation outcomes, and until new arrangements are adopted, standard-power operation under the AFC framework is not generally authorised.

Australia already allows low-power indoor and very-low-power outdoor devices in the band, with power capped at 25 mW under rules updated in October 2025. ACMA has identified demand for wider coverage in settings such as mines and universities, which needs standard power and therefore coordination to protect incumbent point-to-point links, fixed satellite services and radio astronomy. Australia's allocation extends to 6585 MHz, beyond the 6425 MHz limit typical internationally.

On accreditation, ACMA prefers the UK approach of accrediting the system provider rather than individual software products. The regulator said that, given the potential for increased Australian industry participation and reduced regulatory complexity, a system provider model "is currently our preferred approach". Accredited providers would be responsible for compliance, with possible obligations including cybersecurity requirements, record retention, audit capabilities and incident reporting. ACMA is also considering audits, and failure to meet requirements could lead to withdrawal of accreditation. It favours varying the existing class licence over creating a new licence type.

Coexistence with 5G above 6585 MHz is one open issue, and standard-power Wi-Fi below that line may need a guard band in some areas. Most of the 15 respondents to an earlier mention in ACMA's draft spectrum outlook, including Wi-Fi, spectrum sharing and some satellite players, backed the initiative. Mobile industry respondents raised concerns about interference and future 6G spectrum availability. Four trials are under way, in Benaraby, Landsdale, Berrima and Moss Vale, and Burra, and ACMA reports no observed interference to incumbent services. ACMA cautioned that incumbent activity in the trial areas is relatively limited, so the result does not show all coexistence scenarios are resolved.

Only the US and Canada have commercial 6 GHz AFC systems at present. Ofcom has accepted applications from prospective AFC providers since 1 September 2026, with commercial launch anticipated in early 2027, which would put the UK third. Japan's communications ministry said in August 2026 it will finalise a framework for standard-power 6 GHz Wi-Fi by the end of March 2027.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Telecom Gazette** · Australia's 6 GHz AFC Wi-Fi Rollout Targeted for 2028

2 **csagroup.org** · Australia – ACMA Proposes Automatic Frequency Coordination Framework for Standard-Power Wi-Fi in the 6 GHz Band

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

DATA CENTRES 3 OF 11

Firmus says Long Reach data centre in Tasmania is not yet fully funded

Firmus has told a Tasmanian parliamentary committee that Long Reach, its 288MW Bell Bay project, lacks full funding. The disclosure comes after the company pulled its ASX float on 9 October.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

With the float withdrawn and Long Reach to be funded in stages, large AI data centre capacity in Tasmania depends on private funding, Hydro Tasmania's decision on the 444MW request and planning outcomes.

Firmus has yet to lock in full funding for Long Reach, the biggest of its three planned Tasmanian data centres, according to general energy manager Paul Grzinic, who appeared before Tasmania's parliamentary energy committee, ABC News reported. The facility is planned at 288MW.

Grzinic said the St Leonards site at Launceston and the first stage of Wesley Vale were both fully funded. A company spokesperson described St Leonards as well into construction and contracted to a customer. For Wesley Vale stage one, money had been set aside but approval was still pending, the spokesperson said, and Bell Bay, where Long Reach sits, was under option to a customer and would be funded in stages. Firmus declined to name the customers.

On power, Hydro Tasmania said it was weighing a Firmus request for 444MW and expected to decide by the end of the year. The utility pointed to three wind farms still in planning that might eventually supply Firmus, but said no new generation would be ready before 2030 at the earliest. Grzinic told the committee the energy for the Tasmanian sites would be developed and bought within the state, and that consultants had wrongly included incorrect information in a submission to a federal AI inquiry. The Conversation reported that Bell Bay would make Firmus the largest electricity user in Tasmania.

Firmus pulled its application to list on the ASX on 9 October, after order books closed in Sydney that morning. Its board pointed to market volatility and said the terms would not properly reflect the business and its long-term outlook. The Straits Times reported the company had aimed to raise US$5.5 billion, with the money needed to help pay for the wider network build. Firmus said it would seek private funding and look at other public and private options.

An analysis republished from The Conversation said only two Firmus data centres were operating, with the rest in planning or construction. It also said the company's claimed value had climbed almost eight-fold in less than a year, and that many institutional investors reviewing a draft prospectus decided against buying at A$11 a share.

On approvals, Firmus is appealing a George Town Council condition restricting backup diesel generator use at Long Reach. Latrobe Council has asked Planning Minister Kerry Vincent to treat the Wesley Vale proposal as a major project. The Conversation reported that about 6,000 people signed a petition opposing the Bell Bay project.

REPORTING FROM

1 **hmfs.com.au** · After Firmus shelved the biggest ASX listing in 30 years, what does it say to investors about AI hype?

2 **FLASH24** · Firmus's Long Reach data centre not fully funded, Tasmanian

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

CARRIERS & NETWORKS 4 OF 11

Copper thieves cut NBN fibre at Bridgewater bridge, leaving Hobart's north offline

An NBN outage that began around midday on Friday 6 November 2026 hit about 1,350 customers around Brighton and Old Beach after suspected copper thieves damaged cabling on the Bridgewater–Gagebrook bridge. NBN expected full restoration between 6pm and 8pm on Saturday 7 November.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The incident shows how a single physical attack at one bridge crossing can take out service for more than a thousand NBN customers for over a day, and police say theft targeting communications sites in southern Tasmania is rising.

Homes and businesses in Hobart's northern suburbs went more than a day without internet after suspected copper thieves damaged NBN cabling near Gagebrook, Pulse Tasmania reported. The outage started around midday on Friday 6 November 2026 and affected NBN services in and around the Brighton municipality, including Old Beach. An NBN spokesperson said on Friday that about 1,350 customers were affected, while Tasmania Police later described disruption to "several thousand customers".

The spokesperson said the outage was predominantly affecting fibre-to-the-node services. An NBN network update issued around 6pm on Friday said field technicians had found two cables cut by vandals trying to steal copper, in a section crossing a major bridge, and described the repair as "a big job". Pulse reported that sources said the offenders appear to have used a ladder to cut heavy-duty pipes carrying telecommunications and electricity cables on both sides of the bridge, then cut the cables and pulled them through.

The repair plan involved retrieving the damaged cabling on each side of the bridge, laying two replacement cables over the crossing and fitting temporary joins at both ends. NBN gave no restoration estimate on Friday, and some residents said on social media that their providers had told them the outage could last until Sunday. One provider's message shared in a local Facebook group put restoration at 5:01pm on Sunday.

By Saturday, technicians had worked throughout the day to haul new cabling and had begun joining it, according to an NBN update that afternoon. NBN said services would return progressively, with full restoration expected between

6pm and 8pm on Saturday. Customers still without service later that night were advised to power their modem off and on at the wall, which NBN said would often restore the connection. The spokesperson said NBN appreciated "community patience and understanding while we have worked to restore connectivity".

A Tasmania Police spokesperson said reports of copper theft had increased across the state, including several involving offenders targeting communications sites in southern Tasmania. The spokesperson said offenders were "risking their own lives in undertaking this illegal and highly dangerous activity". Police are continuing to investigate and disrupt the market for stolen copper, including compliance checks on recycled metal businesses, and have asked anyone with information to come forward.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Pulse Tasmania** · Parts of Hobart still offline after copper thieves cut fibre internet cables

2 **Pulse Tasmania** · Cooper thieves cause fibre fault, knock out internet for more than 1,300 homes

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

CARRIERS & NETWORKS 5 OF 11

Telstra to switch on RCS messaging from 16 November, Android first

Telstra will begin enabling RCS messaging on 16 November, with Android customers first and iPhone users after Apple's December iOS update. It only works when both people are on Telstra's network, and no other Australian carrier has a date.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 1 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

With Telstra moving first on carrier RCS, rivals such as Optus and Vodafone, none of which has a date, face pressure to improve texting across platforms.

Telstra will begin rolling out RCS messaging on 16 November, upgrading text chats between Android and iPhone users on its network. Android customers are first in line, while iPhone owners get access once Apple releases its December iOS update. CyberShack reported that Telstra will be the first Australian telco to turn on widespread RCS for customers.

The service has a significant restriction: it only functions when the recipient is also a Telstra customer. Carrier-based RCS requires support from both the handset and the network, so coverage is narrow at the outset. A Telstra spokesperson told WhistleOut that the rollout includes Telstra's network brands Belong, Everyday Mobile and ALDI Mobile. Texts to people on Optus or Vodafone may not use RCS.

RCS stands for Rich Communication Services and succeeds SMS and MMS. Rather than using standard SMS channels, messages are carried over the internet, yet they still show up in the handset's default messaging app. Users can expect high-resolution images, read receipts, typing indicators and better group chats, all of which have been absent from iPhone-to-Android conversations. On security, Telstra lists end-to-end encryption and verified business senders, which let users confirm that a message really comes from a legitimate business. There is no charge for RCS, but it draws on data, a point worth remembering when travelling overseas.

Apple has offered RCS support since September 2024, though no Australian telco had enabled it until now. Conversations between iPhone and Android therefore defaulted to SMS or MMS, which pushed many people towards apps such as WhatsApp. Where a telco does not provide RCS, Google delivers its own version through Google Messages, and iMessage covers iOS-to-iOS texting. The other Australian telcos have not yet given an RCS rollout date.

REPORTING FROM

1 **CyberShack** · Telstra RCS messaging finally arrives from 16th November

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

DATA CENTRES 6 OF 11

DigiCo's Ultimo SYD1 fully contracted after 71MW, 15-year deal

DigiCo has signed a 15-year, 71MW agreement with an unnamed global technology company at SYD1 in Ultimo, leaving the Sydney campus fully contracted at a planned 88MW.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 1 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

One 15-year commitment covering 71MW of an 88MW site shows how much inner-Sydney capacity is being taken up ahead of delivery, with the staged build running to mid 2028.

DigiCo has agreed a 15-year contract for 71MW at its SYD1 campus in Ultimo, Sydney, with a global technology company that has not been named. With the agreement in place, all of the 88MW the site is planned to hold is now committed to customers.

SYD1 already operates as a data centre, and works are under way to roughly double its size from about 42.5MW up to the 88MW target. DigiCo expects the first 10MW of the new capacity to be energised by mid 2027, and the balance to follow by mid 2028.

Sydney Tech Expo reported the news on 5 November 2026. It added that the campus is within walking distance of ICC Sydney, venue for the Australian Data Centre Expo in November 2027.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Sydney Tech Expo** · DigiCo’s Sydney Data Centre Is Being Expanded to 88MW And Is 100% Contracted.

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

DATA CENTRES 7 OF 11

AirTrunk drops 140MW Lane Cove West data centre as NSW inquiry reports

AirTrunk will not build its planned 140-megawatt data centre on Mars Road in Lane Cove West, leaving the approved Apollo Place stage next to its SYD2 campus as its only remaining project there. A NSW Upper House committee tabled its data centre report, with 23 recommendations, on 5 November 2026.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

A cluster of large data centre proposals in one Sydney business park has narrowed to a single approved stage, while a parliamentary committee has called for tighter rules and for combined community impacts to be considered, which bears on how future Sydney capacity is planned.

AirTrunk has told In the Cove it is abandoning a 140-megawatt data centre planned for Mars Road and Apollo Place sites in Lane Cove West. The project went to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on 6 March 2026 and set a maximum building height of 37.4 metres. In the Cove understands the call was made a couple of months ago, though AirTrunk had not informed NSW Planning.

AirTrunk said it had carried out early planning work on a possible Mars Road site, but that the process had lapsed. The company said there would be no environmental impact statement and no community consultation for the site. It also said it had no plans for further development in Lane Cove once Stage 5 is finished.

The existing SYD2 data centre and the approved Apollo Place development are unaffected, and AirTrunk describes Apollo Place as Stage 5 of SYD2. AirTrunk says a pending modification would cut that development's gross floor area by about 24 per cent and rework the layout of supporting equipment and services. The company says the two will become one integrated campus. SYD2, at 1 Sirius Road, is designed to reach more than 180 megawatts across multiple buildings and 24 data halls at full build-out, according to AirTrunk.

Three of the four extra data centre proposals once floated for Lane Cove West Business Park have now been dropped. Goodman pulled its 90MW Project Mars at 12 Mars Road in September 2026, and the Lane Cove DC Alliance confirmed it would not go ahead at 16–20 Mars Road.

The news came in the same week that a NSW Upper House committee tabled its report on data centres on 5 November 2026. The report makes 23 recommendations, including stronger rules and more weight on the combined effect of data centres on communities. It does not recommend a moratorium, and the NSW Government is under no obligation to adopt its recommendations.

REPORTING FROM

1 **inthecove.com.au** · AirTrunk Scraps 140MW Lane Cove Data Centre Plans and NSW Inquiry Calls for Tougher Rules - In the Cove

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

CARRIERS & NETWORKS 8 OF 11

Spark NZ opens strategic review of Digital Services, with update due February 2027

Spark New Zealand has started a review of the ownership and structure of its cloud, IT services, data and AI businesses. The company says nothing has been decided and will report back with half-year results in February 2027.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 3 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The review could change who owns a sizeable enterprise cloud and data services business serving the trans-Tasman market, and it shows Spark narrowing its focus to connectivity, with mobile the primary growth priority.

Spark New Zealand (ASX: SPK) has started a strategic review of its Digital Services businesses, a group spanning cloud, IT services, data and artificial intelligence. The company revealed the review in a shareholder newsletter published on Monday 9 November 2026. The work will weigh up how the division should be owned and run in future, with growth and long-term value as the goals.

Spark plans to report back when it releases half-year results in February 2027. Spark said, "No outcome has been reached," and described the review as a search for the structure best placed to back growth while the company stays centred on connectivity. Under its five-year SPK-30 strategy, these businesses sit outside the core connectivity focus.

The review lands as Vince Hawksworth takes the chair following the annual meeting on 6 November. He replaces Justine Smyth, who retired after 15 years on the board, seven of them as chair. Hawksworth, who has led critical infrastructure businesses in New Zealand and Australia, said that as technology evolves "strong connectivity becomes more important, not less". Tommy Björkberg joins in November 2026 as chief operating officer, covering network operations, business technology services and cyber security. He most recently served as Vice President Network and Cloud at KPN, the Netherlands' largest telecommunications provider.

Spark said its FY27 guidance has not changed. It reported continued mobile service revenue growth following a return to growth in FY26, and said iPhone 18 Pro and Pro Max acquisition volumes rose 40 per cent year-on-year during the launch. It has also introduced Spark Upgrader, which offers trade-ins and interest-free payment terms of 24 or 36 months.

The newsletter also addressed One NZ and 2degrees, which have proposed pooling their radio access network infrastructure in a jointly owned wholesale business. The proposal still needs Commerce Commission and Overseas Investment Office approvals. Spark said the plan "would entail a significant change to industry structure and needs to be carefully considered". On spectrum, Spark said it expects no material direct impact from the government's intended approach to renewing 2300MHz and 2600MHz rights, though it still wants predictable settings for long-term investment.

Spark said Digital Services is still winning customers during the review, citing an ICT services agreement with Auckland Airport and data modernisation work for Kiwibank by its Qrious data and AI team. It also said AI-powered network optimisation has delivered a 15 per cent network-wide improvement in effective capacity since 2019.

REPORTING FROM

1 **The Market Floor** · Spark New Zealand launches strategic review of Digital Services as new chair tak
2 **Bell Wire** · Spark New Zealand Launches Digital Services Review, Flags February Update
3 **boldinvestors.com.au** · Spark NZ Shareholder Newsletter

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 9 OF 11

Small telco open letter on regulation burden passes 20 signatories

The Internet Association of Australia says backing for its open letter to Communications Minister Anika Wells has more than doubled since 26 October 2026. It says the signatories likely represent 200,000 or more services in operation.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The IAA argues that stacked obligations could force small providers out, leaving some regional communities without an internet provider. It says the cumulative burden bears on competition and consumer choice.

The Internet Association of Australia said on Monday 9 November 2026 that its open letter to Communications and Sport Minister Anika Wells now carries more than 20 signatures, up from nine when it was published on 26 October 2026. The association says the signatories likely cover a combined 200,000-plus services in operation. They include sole-trader ISPs, small teams and publicly listed telcos.

The letter urges rules that are proportionate and workable, and that do not add to the difficulty of running a small provider. IAA chief executive Narelle Clark said the reaction from members and the wider industry had been "massive". She said telcos of all sizes back strong consumer protections but are warning that the combined cost and complexity of regulation threatens a healthy, competitive market.

Members are most worried about the cost of complying with the proposed Telecommunications (Consumer Protections) Industry Standard 2026. The IAA says the draft points to major billing and IT changes but does not say what implementation period will apply, while changes of that scale are expected to take up to 12 months and probably longer. Clark said members feel stuck between two unworkable options: tier-1 providers have the scale to absorb new costs, but small ones do not. She added that small providers cannot simply recover the costs from customers, since bigger rivals are cutting prices and a price rise risks losing customers.

The IAA reports that some telcos are seriously considering exiting the market, because the rules assume every telco runs its own network. It says providers are also increasingly anxious about liability and heavy penalties for matters beyond their control. Clark said a provider with fewer than five staff is expected to change every part of its business at once and on short timeframes.

Clark was due to appear on Monday before the Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee's public hearing on the Online Safety Amendment (Digital Duty of Care) Bill 2026. She said the bill would impose online safety obligations on ISPs even though, as access providers, they have less control over content shared across their networks. The IAA's submission recommends taking internet carriage services out of the framework's definition of online services, and criticises the consultation on the exposure draft earlier in 2026.

The letter asks for coordinated reform through a regulatory grid that weighs the cumulative effect of new obligations before they are introduced. It also seeks consultation with small providers as well as major telcos, consolidation of overlapping consumer protection rules, and obligations scaled to each provider's size, services and responsibilities. It further requests approved templates, training resources and realistic implementation timeframes.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Internet Association of Australia** · Industry support doubles for small telco call for practical regulation - Internet Association of Australia

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 10 OF 11

ACMA proposes folding EMC rules into General Equipment Rules

The ACMA is consulting on moving electromagnetic compatibility requirements into the Radiocommunications Equipment (General) Rules 2021 and repealing the two separate 2017 instruments. Submissions close at 5pm AEDT on Friday 29 January 2027.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 1 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Suppliers and importers of radiocommunications equipment would deal with one consolidated set of rules rather than separate EMC instruments, though the ACMA says it intends broadly to maintain existing regulatory outcomes.

The ACMA has opened consultation on changes that would bring electromagnetic compatibility (EMC) requirements into the Radiocommunications Equipment (General) Rules 2021, known as the General Equipment Rules. Submissions close at 5pm AEDT on Friday 29 January 2027.

Under the proposal, the substantive requirements in the Radiocommunications (Electromagnetic Compatibility) Standard 2017 and the Radiocommunications Labelling (Electromagnetic Compatibility) Notice 2017 would be incorporated into the General Equipment Rules. Both of those instruments would then be repealed. The ACMA said the change would complete its objective of making the General Equipment Rules a single consolidated source for regulating radiocommunications equipment.

The ACMA also proposes to modernise recognised standards, EMC compliance exemptions and labelling requirements, while broadly maintaining existing regulatory outcomes where appropriate.

It is seeking feedback on several specific areas. These include updating device classifications and associated definitions to reflect changes in technology, and recognising additional EMC industry standards. They also cover simplifying and aligning equipment supply and labelling arrangements where possible, and updating equipment standards and related requirements to reflect current industry and best practice.

REPORTING FROM

1 **ACMA** · Proposed amendments to the General Equipment Rules: EMC and other amendments

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

SATELLITE & SPACE 11 OF 11

Rakuten and AST SpaceMobile form Japan direct-to-device satellite venture

Rakuten Mobile and AST SpaceMobile have formed a joint venture, backed by grants of around US$1 billion from Japan's communications ministry, to offer direct-to-smartphone service over AST's Bluebird LEO satellites from March 2029.

Best Effort desk · Tue 10 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Japan is putting government money behind a direct-to-device constellation from a single partner, while the other big Japanese operators have chosen SpaceX, a split that shows how satellite-to-phone supply is being contested in APAC. AST's satellite count and launch plans show how much deployment remains before the service starts in 2029.

Rakuten and AST SpaceMobile have formed a joint venture to build a direct-to-device network in Japan using low-Earth orbit satellites, with grants of around US$1 billion from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC). Rakuten announced the venture in a press release on Monday 9 November 2026. The service will run over AST's Bluebird constellation using midband spectrum, with a start date of March 2029 according to Light Reading. SDxCentral described the timing as early 2029.

SDxCentral reported that the two firms won an MIC tender to form Rakuten AST under the Japan Low Earth Orbit Satellite Communications Project, known as J-LEO. The money is meant to support a Japanese-flagged mid-band constellation. Rakuten AST also plans to offer the same services to AST's global customers. Rakuten said the service is aimed at strengthening disaster and emergency communications in Japan.

Rakuten's relationship with AST dates to 2020, when the companies signed a commercial agreement and Rakuten joined Vodafone as a lead investor in what was then AST & Science, bringing its total capital to $128 million, SDxCentral reported. Rakuten remains the only major Japanese operator working with AST, while KDDI, SoftBank and NTT DoCoMo have favoured SpaceX for direct-to-device. AST says it has more than 60 operator partners worldwide, including AT&T, Verizon, Vodafone and Bell Canada.

Rakuten Mobile will also work with AST on AI edge computing in orbit and on AI-driven spectrum management. Rakuten said the research will look at faster data communications and industry-specific IoT offerings for logistics, infrastructure monitoring and construction. Ramon Space chief product officer David Anderson told SDxCentral that IoT is a leading use case for space-based compute. Anderson said edge computing is "a great way to solve the communication bottleneck".

AST's constellation is still small, with 13 satellites in orbit, including one test satellite and five first-generation satellites that can deliver peak data rates of 100 Mbit/s. The second-generation Block 2 craft will have double the throughput, and AST is aiming for at least 45-60 satellites to cover key markets. Launch capacity is a constraint: AST says it has agreements to deploy more than 100 satellites, yet it has announced it is developing its own 20-ton Blacklift rocket, with a first commercial launch expected in late 2028.

Starlink uses far smaller satellites at lower orbits and has around 12,000 craft in orbit, Light Reading noted. SpaceX aims to add direct-to-cell capability with next-generation V2 satellites, which the FCC has approved, with the first launches expected in 2027. Separately on the same day, NTT, NTT DoCoMo Business, the Development Bank of Japan, MUFG and Mitsubishi Electric signed an MoU to examine the feasibility of a satellite mega-constellation.

REPORTING FROM

1. **Light Reading** · Rakuten and AST form D2D joint venture in Japan
2. **sdxcentral.com** · Rakuten, AST SpaceMobile to form official Japan D2D constellation; promise edge compute in space

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.