

Calling for a unified approach to smart grid spectrum

The ACMA has reiterated its call to the electricity industry for a unified, nationwide approach to spectrum for smart electricity grids.

The demand for electricity is expected to increase significantly in the coming decade as devices dependant on electricity, such as electric cars, become more prevalent. In order to manage the load on electricity networks, enhanced monitoring and automation of electricity infrastructure will be required. 'Smart grid' is the term used to describe this modernisation of utility grids.

sharing with other industries with similar network requirements.

The ACMA will continue to engage with the energy industry to assist in the development of smart electricity networks.


ACMA consultation on spectrum

Attendance at the Smart Grids Roundtable continued the ACMA's

stakeholders on a regular basis. The Transport Spectrum Tune-Up, to be held in Melbourne on 18 November, is one such event.

This month's Transport Spectrum Tune-Up follows two previous events held in Canberra in February 2009 and in Brisbane in October 2008. The Spectrum Tune-Up held earlier this year covered spectrum licensing issues including 2.3GHz residual lots, spectrum suitable for wireless access services, an overview of spectrum trading and microwave service issues.

The ACMA's fourth annual radiocommunications conference, RadComms2010, will be held on the 5 and 6 May 2010 and will focus on strategic, contemporary radiofrequency spectrum management issues.

In a rapidly evolving technological and market environment, the ACMA strongly believes that it and industry can benefit from this type of general forum where stakeholders (including the ACMA) mutually inform one another about developments and issues that impact on contemporary and future spectrum management and planning. 

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'The ACMA takes smart grids and their potential benefits very seriously. We will continue to work closely with the electricity industry to find the right spectrum solutions over the coming months,' said Chris Chapman, Chairman of the ACMA.

The issue of radiofrequency spectrum requirements for the rollout of smart electricity grids was the subject of the Smart Grids Roundtable in Brisbane in late August. The roundtable brought together the ACMA and power utilities from most states and territories.

A number of Australian power utilities are planning to rollout smart grids across their networks to support their monitoring, automation and communications needs. Energy Networks Australia (ENA), which hosted the roundtable, outlined the need for a high reliability 'machine to machine' network with voice capability, which would require spectrum at or below 2.5 GHz.

With spectrum in the bands most sought after by utilities being scarce and highly valued, the ACMA presented a range of options to the utilities, including participation in future spectrum allocations, the purchase of existing spectrum licences and

ongoing communication and consultation with a range of sectors, all with an interest in spectrum.

Increasingly, the ACMA is dealing with stakeholders for whom radiocommunications is not their core business but an increasingly important enabler. Establishing and maintaining effective information-sharing arrangements with this wider group of stakeholders is a challenge that the ACMA is actively addressing.

Part of the ACMA's approach to consultation on spectrum matters includes hosting seminars and events to engage with

