

FACT SHEET: REVIEW OF IDA'S REGULATORY REQUIREMENT FOR DIRECTORY SERVICES

1. Facilities-Based Operators offering fixed-line telephony services (“**Fixed-Line Operators**”) in Singapore are currently required by IDA to provide the following to their subscribers:
 - (a) An integrated telephone directory (which includes the directory information of all level 6 fixed-line numbers¹ in Singapore) in either printed or electronic form. These phonebooks are commonly known as the “White Pages” and consist of two parts – a residential listing (containing residential subscriber information) and a business listing (containing business subscriber information) (“**Published Directories**”); and
 - (b) A directory enquiry service, which allows subscribers to dial “100” to request for a residential or business fixed-line telephone number (“**Directory Enquiry**”).

These services are collectively known as “**Directory Services**”.

2. To facilitate the provision of the Directory Services, Fixed-Line Operators are required by IDA to maintain an integrated database of subscriber information. This Directory Services database allows the Fixed-Line Operators to provide a seamless directory service to their subscribers, to enable them to reach any Fixed-Line Operator's subscribers. In the event that any subscriber of a Fixed-Line Operator does not wish for his directory information to be included in the Directory Services database, the subscriber can request for his/her number to be “unlisted” from the database, and may have to pay a recurring fee² for the unlisting service (“**Number Unlisting Service**”).
3. The practice of Fixed-Line Operators providing Directory Services was introduced several decades ago when fixed-line telephones were the main mode of telecommunication, and telephone numbers were not easily accessible or searchable by the public then. The Directory Services were the only sources of information that the public could rely on to contact fixed-line telephone subscribers, and consumers and businesses saw the Directory Services as an essential service. In view of technology changes, shifts in consumer behaviour, as well as increasing public awareness and concerns about protection of personal data, IDA initiated a review of this regulatory requirement.
4. IDA has since completed its review of the Directory Services requirement. The key changes are:
 - (a) Fixed-Line Operators will no longer be required to publish the residential listing. However, they must continue to publish the business listing, and to provide the

¹ That is, fixed-line numbers beginning with the digit “6”.

² Today, the Fixed-Line Operators charge their subscribers a combination of a one-time fee and/or recurring fee to be unlisted from the Directory Services Database.

Directory Enquiry service (i.e., “Service 100”) for both residential and business fixed-line numbers, i.e.,:

	Integrated Published Directories (i.e., CD-ROM, online, or printed hard copies)		Directory Enquiry Service on an integrated customer database (i.e., service 100)	
	Residential	Business	Residential	Business
Current Requirement	✓	✓	✓	✓
New Requirement	x	✓	✓	✓

Nonetheless, Fixed-Line Operators may continue to provide the residential listing for published directories on a voluntary/commercial basis. Fixed-Line Operators will have to comply with the Personal Data Protection Act to obtain subscribers’ consent for the collection, use and disclosure of their data regardless of whether the directory services provided are borne out of IDA’s regulatory requirement or are of their own voluntary/commercial offerings.

- (b) Recognising that a small number of consumers may still use the published directories to check for residential numbers occasionally, Fixed-Line Operators are required to offer three free directory enquiries per month to each fixed-line subscriber. This will allow each fixed-line subscriber to request for three public fixed-line telephone numbers every month at no charge, to mitigate the impact on consumers who are affected by the removal of the regulatory requirement to provide the residential listing for Published Directories. Based on IDA’s household survey³ results on the usage of the printed directories and Directory Enquiry services, three free directory enquiries per month should be sufficient for the average directory user.
- (c) Fixed-Line Operators must allow their subscribers a one-time free-of-charge Number Unlisting Service, should the subscriber wish to unlist his/her telephone number from the Directory Services database. This is in recognition of consumers’ interest to better protect their personal data and to be in line with the Personal Data Protection Act. This requirement will apply to any directory services offered by the Fixed-Line Operator (i.e., whether on a voluntary/commercial basis or to meet IDA’s regulatory requirement). To address the concerns of subscribers changing their mind frequently (e.g., request to be unlisted but subsequently request to be listed again) resulting in Fixed-Line Operators incurring resources to effect these changes, IDA will allow the Fixed-Line Operator to charge a nominal one-time administrative fee for subsequent listing or unlisting requests by the subscriber.

³ IDA’s Consumer Awareness and Satisfaction Survey 2010

- (d) All recurring fees for the Number Unlisting Service are to cease. Fixed-Line Operators who are currently charging their existing fixed-line subscribers recurring fees for the Number Unlisting Service must cease these charges.
 - (e) Fixed-Line Operators must obtain subscribers' consent on whether they would want to be included in (i.e., "listed") or excluded from (i.e., "unlisted") the Directory Services database at the point of service subscription. The Fixed-Line Operator shall not charge the subscriber for selecting either option. If the subscriber chooses to be *unlisted* at the point of service subscription, the subscriber shall be deemed to have exercised his/her right to the above-mentioned one-time free Number Unlisting Service.
 - (f) Existing subscribers who choose to remain listed in the Directory Services and new subscribers who choose to be listed in the Directory Services at the point of service subscription will not be charged for the listing service, which is the current practice.
5. In summary, the revised Directory Services regulatory requirement is designed to mitigate the growing concerns from individuals regarding the protection of personal data while ensuring that some form of Directory Services continues to be available to the public. To this end, IDA is of the view that removing the regulatory requirement for the residential listing for published directories while retaining the other Directory Services requirements (with three free directory enquiries a month), combined with the requirement for Fixed-Line Operators to cease charging subscribers for unlisting from the Directory Services database, would achieve this objective.
6. The above changes will be implemented with effect from 1 April 2014. In other words, the Fixed-Line Operators must implement all the changes, including offering their subscribers three free directory enquiries per month, and ceasing to charge subscribers for the Number Unlisting Service by this date⁴. The Fixed-Line Operators are expected to continue to comply with the existing Directory Services regulatory requirement until then.

⁴ Fixed-Line Operators are not required to change the current publication cycle of the Published Directories, so long as the Published Directories for business listings (which is still required by IDA) is provided to fixed-line subscribers by the end of each calendar year.

7. Summary of Changes:-

Current Requirements	Revised Requirements (with effect from 1 April 2014)
<u>Published Directories (in either Printed/CD-ROM/Online form)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential listing Business listing 	<u>Published Directories (in either Printed/CD-ROM/Online form)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business listing⁵
<u>Directory Enquiry (service “100”)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential numbers Business numbers Each directory enquiry is chargeable (fee determined by Fixed-Line operators) 	<u>Directory Enquiry (service “100”)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential numbers Business numbers 3 free directory enquiries per month (subsequent enquiries chargeable; fee determined by Fixed-Line operators)
<u>Number Unlisting Service (i.e., service to be unlisted from the Directory Services database)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chargeable (fee determined by Fixed-Line Operators) 	<u>Number Unlisting Service (i.e., service to be unlisted from the Directory Services database)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One-time free-of-charge Number Unlisting Service⁶; and Operators are to cease imposing any recurring charges to subscribers who request to be unlisted.
<u>Listed in the Directory Services Database</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subscribers are automatically included in the Directory Services database at the point of service sign-up. 	<u>Listed in the Directory Services Database</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fixed-Line Operators must obtain subscribers’ consent on whether they would like to be included in (i.e., “listed”) or excluded from (i.e., “unlisted”) the Directory Services database at the point of service subscription⁷

⁵ Fixed-Line Operators may choose to provide the residential listing on a voluntary/commercial basis. For the avoidance of doubt, the Fixed-Line Operators (and their data intermediaries, if any) will have to comply with the Personal Data Protection Act to obtain subscribers’ consent for the collection, use and disclosure of their data regardless of whether the directory services provided are pursuant to IDA’s regulatory requirement or are of their own voluntary/commercial offerings (where applicable).

⁶ The Number Unlisting Service will be free for subscribers for their first request to unlist. Where a subscriber changes his mind frequently, i.e., requests to be unlisted by subsequently requests to be listed again, IDA will allow the Fixed-Line Operator to charge a nominal one-time administrative fee for subsequent listing or unlisting requests.

⁷ Subscribers who choose to be unlisted from the Directory Services database at the point of sign-up are deemed to have exercised his/her right to the one-time free Number Unlisting Service. Subsequent changes may be subject to charges by the Fixed-Line Operators.

About Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore

The Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) is committed to growing Singapore into a dynamic global infocomm hub. IDA uses an integrated approach to developing infocomm in Singapore. This involves nurturing a competitive telecoms market as well as a conducive business environment with programmes and schemes for both local and international companies. For more news and information, visit www.ida.gov.sg.

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