



StarHub Ltd
(Reg No. 199802208C)
67 Ubi Avenue 1
#05-01 StarHub Green
Singapore 408942
Tel: (65) 6825 5000
Fax: (65) 6721 5002

10 December 2012

Ms Aileen Chia
Deputy Director-General (Telecoms & Post)
Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore
10 Pasir Panjang Road
#10-01 Mapletree Business City
Singapore 117438

By email: IDA_Consultation@ida.gov.sg

Dear Ms Chia

CONSULTATION ON REVIEW OF REGULATORY REQUIREMENT FOR DIRECTORY SERVICES

1. We refer to the above public consultation document issued by the Authority on 18 October 2012.
2. Enclosed is StarHub Ltd's submission to the consultation. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should anything in this letter require clarification or elaboration.

Yours sincerely
For and on behalf of
StarHub Ltd

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "TG" with a stylized flourish.

Tim Goodchild
Head (Government & Strategic Affairs)

Encl.

**CONSULTATION ON THE REVIEW OF IDA'S REGULATORY
REQUIREMENT FOR DIRECTORY SERVICES**

**Submission by StarHub Ltd to the
Info-communications Development Authority of Singapore**

10 December 2012

Contact Details:

StarHub Ltd
67 Ubi Avenue 1
#05-01 StarHub Green
Singapore 408942
Phone: +65 6825 5000
Fax: +65 6721 5002

Tim Goodchild
Email: timothy@starhub.com

1. Executive Summary

1.1 StarHub welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Authority's review of regulatory requirement for directory services.

1.2 The demand and usage of integrated directories and directory enquiry service (collectively referred to herein as "Directory Services") has declined significantly in recent years. We believe that the existing regulatory requirements for Directory Services are no longer relevant today, and we are therefore of the view that:

- (i) Option 1 would be the most consistent approach given the declining demand for Directory Services and public concerns about personal data protection; while Option 3 and Option 4 should not be considered. However, StarHub is also prepared to consider Option 2;
- (ii) Fixed-line operators should be allowed to charge customers for unlisting their numbers, as there is work (and cost) involved in the unlisting process. StarHub would propose setting a one-time charge for the unlisting service;
- (iii) Going forward, StarHub would support an "opt-in" approach for directory information (i.e. the fixed-line customer must explicitly give their consent to be included in the integrated directory database); and
- (iv) In the review, it will be necessary to consider how the revised regulatory requirements would apply to existing fixed-line customers. It would be important for the Authority to consult and work further with the fixed-line operators to establish the efforts and timelines necessary to support the revised requirements.

1.3 StarHub's specific comments on the consultation paper are set out in the following section.

2. Specific Responses

Part II: The Current Situation on Directory Services

Question 1:

IDA invites views and comments on the current situation in relation to Directory Services, in particular, whether you agree with the trends observed on the demand and usage, and whether Directory Services in their current form continue to be relevant in today's environment.

StarHub agrees with the Authority that demand and usage of integrated directories and directory enquiry service (collectively referred to herein as "Directory Services") has declined significantly in recent years. In 2011, less than 4% of StarHub's fixed-line customers collected the integrated directories. The number of directory enquiries in 2011 has also dropped to nearly 50% of 2008 levels.

As the Authority has correctly pointed out, the decreasing demand for (and usage of) Directory Services is a reflection of the changes in infocomm landscape and consumer usage patterns. Consumers already have various (and more convenient) ways to obtain directory information and/or establish communications with other parties.

StarHub also agrees with the Authority's observation that there is increasing public awareness and concerns over the use and protection of personal data. It is also important to note that the publishing of integrated directories is environmentally damaging, particularly when the published directories receive little (if any) use.

Given the significant decline in demand and usage of Directory Services, and the changes in infocomm landscape and consumer usage patterns, StarHub strongly believes that the current regulatory requirements for Directory Services are no longer relevant today. This is evident as many overseas jurisdictions have already relaxed or lifted their regulatory requirements on Directory Services.

Question 2:

Do you agree that IDA should adopt Option 2 to remove the regulatory requirement for provision of integrated directories but retain the requirement for the provision of directory enquiry services? If not, please state your preferred Option and the supporting reasons.

Question 3:

Are there other options that IDA may consider in the review of the regulatory requirement for Directory Services?

In its review of the regulatory requirements for Directory Services, the Authority has proposed adopting Option 2. Option 2 would maintain the availability of one form of integrated directory service (i.e. directory enquiry service) to the public, while reducing the cost burden on fixed-line operators, and mitigating public concerns on data protection. The Authority would review in the future whether the requirement for directory enquiry services should also be removed, taking into account the consumer demand and usage patterns.

StarHub believes that the existing Directory Services are no longer relevant for the overwhelming majority of Singaporeans. Given the advancement in technology and changes in infocomm landscape, consumers already have various means to obtain the directory information and/or establish communications with other parties. It is also important to note that the cost to provide an integrated directory has increased over the years (while operators are still required to provide them at no charge). Given these factors, StarHub believes that:

- Option 1 would be the most sensible approach (given the declining demand for Directory Services and public concerns about personal data protection); and
- Option 3 and Option 4 should not be considered.

However, StarHub recognises that Option 1 could (potentially) be disruptive to some customers, as there may still be some demand for directory enquiry services. Therefore, StarHub is willing to support Option 2, as proposed by the Authority. However, as there are already alternatives available in obtaining directory information, StarHub submits that fixed-line operators should be allowed to set a reasonable charge for the use of directory enquiry services.

Question 4: IDA invites views and comments on IDA's proposal to require Fixed-Line Operators to cease charging subscribers for unlisting their numbers.

The Authority has proposed that fixed-line operators should cease charging customers for unlisting their numbers.

Unfortunately, considerable work (and cost) is involved with unlisted numbers. It is necessary to ensure that information about unlisted customers is not publicly disclosed. Should a fixed-line customer wish to unlist its directory information, StarHub would need to perform the necessary tasks to remove the customer's directory information from the printed integrated directories, the directory enquiry service database, and the Global Yellow Pages Ltd's online integrated directories.

Going forward, if a customer decides, **at the point of signing up for service**, that they do not wish to be listed, this could be done without a charge to the customer. However, if a customer is listed for Directory Services, and then decides to be unlisted, operators should be entitled to charge for this.

Therefore, StarHub submits that operators should be allowed to set an unlisting charge. This could be a one-time, rather than a recurring, charge.

Question 5:

IDA also invites views and comments on whether IDA should require the Fixed-Line Operators to obtain the subscriber's consent to be included in the directory services database on an opt-in (i.e., the subscriber must explicitly give consent to be included in the database) or opt-out basis (i.e., the subscriber will be included in the directory services database by default unless the subscriber takes action to opt-out from it).

StarHub would support an opt-in approach (i.e. the customer must give their consent to be included in the integrated directory database). This approach is consistent with the regulatory principles in the Telecom Competition Code and the Personal Data Protection Act, in which a customer's consent is generally required for the use of his/her personal data. This approach will also be in line with Option 2 (as proposed by the Authority), and the cost of unlisting directory information would be avoided for customers who do not opt-in.

However, we would highlight that, should an opt-in approach be adopted, and if operators are required to cease charging for unlisting services, it will be necessary to implement transitional arrangements for existing customers. Clearly, it would not be feasible to require all existing fixed-line customers to opt-in again for the inclusion of their directory information in the Directory Services. Further, if the operators cease charging for the unlisting service, some operators may face a large surge in unlisting requests from customers. StarHub would caution that the new requirements could not be implemented overnight. It would be important for the Authority to consult and work further with the operators to establish the efforts and timeline to support the revised requirements.

3. Conclusion

3.1 It is important for regulatory regimes to change over time, to reflect consumer preferences and changes in technology. With the advent of mobile services (and the ability to store numbers on the handsets) and internet-based directories, it is clearly time to review the regulatory regime for Directory Services.

3.2 Declining take-up and utilisation levels (and the Authority's own research) have highlighted the need to lift the regulatory obligations on operators in regard to Directory Services. StarHub would submit that:

- (i) Option 1 would be the most consistent approach, given the declining demand for Directory Services and public concerns about personal data protection. However, StarHub is also prepared to adopt Option 2.
- (ii) Options 3 and 4 should not be considered, given the declining take-up and utilisation levels for Directory Services.
- (iii) Fixed-line operators should be allowed to charge customers for unlisting their numbers, as there is work (and cost) involved in this activity. StarHub would therefore propose setting a one-time charge for the unlisting service.
- (iv) Prospectively, StarHub supports the opt-in approach for the inclusion of directory information (i.e. going forward, the fixed-line customer must explicitly give consent to be included in the integrated directory database).
- (v) In the review, it will be necessary to consider how the revised regulatory requirements would apply to existing fixed-line customers. It would be important for the Authority to consult and work further with the fixed-line operators to establish the effort and timelines necessary to support the revised requirements.

3.3 StarHub is grateful for the opportunity to comment on this matter. In the event that submissions from other parties raise new issues or is likely to affect responses given by StarHub under this submission, we would appreciate the opportunity to comment further on this matter.

StarHub Ltd
10 December 2012