

INFORMATION PAPER
IDA'S OPEN ACCESS POLICY AS IT RELATES TO
INTERNATIONAL TELEPHONE SERVICES

BACKGROUND

1. IDA's open access policy objective has been to ensure that there is full interconnection and access arrangements to enable seamless and transparent access by users of any telecommunication services. Therefore, regardless of the telecommunication network that the user is directly connected to, users should be able to make and receive calls to other users and to choose, access and use the services of other telecommunication service providers. However, with the increase in the number of international telephone operators in a fully liberalised environment, it may not be practical to apply this overall policy across the board for all types of services and in all instances.
2. IDA had received industry requests for clarifications on how this overall policy applied to pre-paid SIM card services and in-bound roaming services in Singapore. Based on consultation with the mobile phone operators and after careful consideration of their feedback, the following policy approach has been adopted.

POLICY APPROACH

Pre-Paid SIM Card Services

3. Mobile phone operators should provide open access to its pre-paid subscribers and should not block access to any IDD services. This is in view that it would not be desirable or justifiable for this increasingly large number of mobile phone users to be denied the choice of using any IDD service provider, if they are willing to receive separate billings for such calls made.
4. If there is no arrangement for the IDD operator to forward its billing table to the mobile operator, the IDD operator will block the calls at his end and only those pre-paid customers who have pre-registered can make use of its services. IDA will leave it to the respective IDD operators (including ISR operators) to decide whether or not to extend their services to pre-paid SIM customers. If the respective IDD operators makes a commercial decision not to serve this pre-paid market, the IDD operator

could then request the respective mobile phone operators to bar or not enable the IDD operator's access numbers at their end. In this case, both operators need not entertain any pre-paid user's request for service activation.

5. Should IDD operators decide to serve the pre-paid market, they could put in further safeguards against fraud such as a voice prompt with PIN validation¹, much the same as for ICC services. While the likelihood of fraud may still exist, the use of PIN validation helps to alleviate this concern to a large extent. IDD operators will bill directly pre-paid subscribers; these pre-paid subscribers who wish to have these IDD operators' services must pre-register with them.
6. Alternatively, if an arrangement exist for billing tables to be handed over from IDD operators to the mobile phone operators (be it via resale or other commercially agreed arrangement), the mobile phone operator could then deduct the IDD call charges directly from the pre-paid customer's SIM card. This option, however, will not be mandated as the default option due to the technical and implementation difficulties, even though it may be the most desirable in terms of achieving the pre-paid service concept and open access goal.
7. Consumers should be able to make a conscious decision for themselves whether to use these IDD services and consequently be billed directly by the IDD operator. For consumers who want to continue to use the "hassle-free service" and prefer not to receive a separate IDD bill, they too would be able to make the decision not to use the IDD operator's services and to use the IDD services which his mobile phone operator has a billing arrangement with. Alternatively, customers could choose not to make any IDD calls at all via the pre-paid cards. Whatever the case, the choice should be for consumers to make.
8. In summary, IDA's open access policy will be maintained for pre-paid SIM card users and the various options outlined above can address to a large extent the concerns with fraud and bad debt. In addition, consumers can still exercise their choice on the IDD services they wish to subscribe

¹ The voice prompt would prompt pre-registered users to enter a user ID and an assigned PIN code before the IDD call would be put through.

to, and the payment mode. The pre-paid cards will still allow users to enjoy a hassle free and “pay-and-forget” service.

In-bound Roaming Services

9. In-bound roaming services will not be included in IDA’s open access policy. This is considering that these roamers are primarily not subscribers of mobile phone operators in Singapore in the first instance. However, should in-bound roamers wish to use the services of other IDD operators who do not have a working arrangement with the mobile phone operator, in-bound roamers would need to pre-register with the respective IDD operator so as to effect direct billing by the IDD operator.

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