

Draft Telecommunications (Numbering Charges) (Allocation Charge) Amendment Determination 2026 (No. 1) Consultation paper

APRIL 2026

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Summary

The ACMA is responsible for the administration, allocation, and regulation of Australian telephone numbers. We establish arrangements that give telecommunications infrastructure providers confidence in access to numbering resources to support end-to-end connectivity and the provision of communications services.

The Australian Government contracts ZOAK Solutions to deliver most telephone number allocation and administrative services via the Numbering System. The ACMA undertakes more complex number allocations that require manual assessment.

The current contract with ZOAK expires on 2 August 2027. Consistent with government policy, we recover the cost of the contract by imposing numbering charges on entities that use numbering services.

The ACMA sets fees to recover the cost of numbering services through 2 separate charging instruments:

- [Telecommunications Charges Determination 2022](#), made under the [Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005](#) (ACMA Act), which applies to geographic number allocations and carriage service provider and smartnumber account registrations.
- [Telecommunications \(Numbering Charges\) \(Allocation Charge\) Determination 2025](#) (Allocation Charge Determination) made under the [Telecommunications \(Numbering Charges\) Act 1997](#) (Numbering Charges Act), which applies to all other allocations (except smartnumbers).

These instruments set the same flat fee for transactions in the Numbering System calculated using the same charging model, noting transactions are automated and use the same amount of processing time per transaction. Accordingly, the fees in each instrument have previously, and are currently being consulted on and made together.

The purpose of this paper is to consult on 2 numbering charge proposals to amend the Allocation Charge Determination. These are to:

1. decrease the charge to use the automated Numbering System for number allocation from \$57 to \$10
2. increase the charge for manual processing of applications for a mobile network code from \$57 to \$1,025, and an international signalling point code from \$57 to \$698.

The proposed decrease in the charge for automated services has been prompted by higher than previously forecasted transactions in the Numbering System, which has resulted in higher-than-expected revenue. The reduction will bring arrangements towards a neutral cost recovery position by the end of the current contract period.

The charge to allocate mobile network and international signalling point codes is currently the same as for automated transactions. It is proposed to increase the charge for these number types to reflect the cost of processing these applications which are done manually. This is intended to improve consistency with policy of recovering costs for a specific function where these can be easily attributed to and recovered from the user.

We are consulting in parallel on numbering charges set in the Telecommunications Charges Determination 2022 as part of its Cost Recovery Implementation Statement for broadcasting, radiocommunications and telecommunications services. Interested parties may make a single submission in regard to the proposed changes in numbering charges in both instruments.

Issues for comment

The ACMA seeks submissions from interested parties on the new fees proposed in the draft Telecommunications (Numbering Charges (Allocation Charge) Amendment Determination 2026 (No 1). The draft determination is available on the landing page for this consultation paper.

We propose that the transaction charge for numbers processed in the Numbering System be reduced from \$57 to \$10.

We also propose that the allocation charges for mobile network codes (MNCs) will be increased from \$57 to \$1,025, and international signalling point codes (ISPCs) increased from \$57 to \$698. While these are comparatively large increases, they remain small compared to the cost of setting up mobile networks and reflect the relative scarcity of these resources. The proposed new charging amounts convey the cost of undertaking the manual work to allocate MNCs and ISPCs respectively.

Assessment of applications for these codes is not automated in the Numbering System. Applications are processed manually by ACMA staff and involve a significant amount of work. Revenue received from these code applications is not included in cost recovery related to the Numbering System.

The ACMA is consulting in parallel on numbering charges set in the Telecommunications Charges Determination 2022 as part of its Cost Recovery Implementation Statement for broadcasting, radiocommunications and telecommunications services. That process is similarly consulting on a proposed decrease the charge to use the automated Numbering System for geographic number allocations and carriage service provider and smartnumber account registrations from \$57 to \$10.

Interested parties may make a single submission about the proposed changes in numbering charges in both instruments.

Charging framework

Background

Telephone numbers are used by carriage service providers (CSPs) to provide carriage services to the public. The Telecommunications Numbering Plan 2025 (the Numbering Plan) is made by the ACMA under section 455 of *Telecommunications Act 1997* (Telecommunications Act) and sets out the framework for the numbering of carriage services in Australia and the use of numbers in connection with the supply of such services.

The Numbering Plan sets out rules about the allocation of numbers to carriage service providers (CSPs), the transfer of allocated numbers between CSPs, surrender and withdrawal, as well as rules around the portability and use of different types of numbers in connection with the supply of carriage services.

ZOAK operates the Numbering System on behalf of the ACMA under contract. The Numbering System provides registration, allocation, transfer, surrender and other administrative services to CSPs for most of Australia's telephone numbers consistent with the rules in the Numbering Plan.

Charging framework

The ACMA recovers the cost of the contract with ZOAK through numbering charges consistent with the Australian Government Charging Framework. The Charging Framework sets out that direct cost recovery is preferred where the cost of the specific function can be easily attributed to and recovered from the user. Fee revenue is remitted to the consolidated revenue fund in accordance with Commonwealth financial arrangements.

Recovering the costs for numbering services means that those who use the service contribute towards its costs. We set fees to recover the cost of numbering services through 2 separate charging instruments – one made under the ACMA Act and the other under the Numbering Charges Act.

Charges related to the allocation of geographic numbers and charges to register as a CSP or a smartnumbers user are set out in the Telecommunications Charges Determination 2022, made under the ACMA Act. Charges for these functions must comply with the Charging Framework and the Cost Recovery Policy and are included in the draft Cost Recovery Implementation Statement – fees for radiocommunications, telecommunications and broadcasting services: Budget year 2026–27.

Charges for the allocation of all other numbers, including free and local rate numbers (FLRNs), mobile numbers, and Internet of Things service numbers are set out in the Allocation Charge Determination, made under the Numbering Charges Act. The same cost recovery approach has been used here as it represents a robust and defensible methodology on which to charge.

The instruments made under the ACMA Act and Numbering Charges Act set the same flat transaction fee calculated using the same methodology, noting applicable transactions occur in the Numbering System, are largely automated and use the same amount of processing time per transaction. The proposed fees in each instrument are proposed to be amended together.

We are proposing a change to the fee for allocations of MNCs and ISPCs. Because of the more detailed application requirements being unlike all other number allocations, applications for these codes are not processed in the Numbering System. They are manually processed by ACMA staff and involve a significant amount of work. We intend to charge an allocation charge based on the ACMA's hourly rate.

Charge proposals

Proposal 1: Decrease the charge for automated transactions

Costs to be recovered

Since August 2015, the majority of the ACMA's numbering-related allocation and other administration functions have been provided under contract by ZOAK. The total value of this contract, including system enhancements, between August 2015 and August 2024 was \$11,296,774 (GST-exclusive)¹. In 2024, we varied the contract, providing further extension options to 2 August 2027, which it has exercised.

The contract costs associated with the calculation of, and support for the collection of the Annual Numbering Charge and sale of smartnumbers are excluded.

Costs of system enhancements, including to make available new number ranges introduced in the Numbering Plan in 2025 and provided by ZOAK under the contract as additional services have been added to the recoverable costs. A contingency for an additional 3 months of estimated contract costs has been included, on the assumption a further short extension may be necessary to support implementation of new Numbering System arrangements in late 2027.

Table 1: Total contract costs to be recovered under current contract

Costs	Amount
Contract price years 1-9 plus system enhancements	\$11,296,774
Less contract cost supporting the collection of the annual numbering charge	(\$1,326,113)
Less contract cost of providing smartnumbers	(\$3,086,653)
Subtotal Contract costs recovered in first nine years	\$6,884,008
Contract price year 10, 11 and 12 plus system enhancements and contingency	\$3,122,984
Less contract cost supporting the collection of the annual numbering charge	(\$324,979)
Less contract cost of providing smartnumbers	(\$758,285)
Subtotal Contract costs to be recovered in year 10, 11 and 12 of contract	\$2,039,720
Total costs of contract to be recovered	\$8,923,728

Table 1 sets out the total contract costs to be recovered by the ACMA. Costs for year 12 is an estimate as contact fees are escalated by CPI on 2 August each year. As of 30 June 2025, the ACMA had recovered \$8,216,729 of relevant costs.

Transaction trends and forecast

There has been significant year on year volatility in the number of transactions in the Numbering System. From 2018-19, there was a downward trend in transactions. See Table 2 and Figure 1 below.

Economic modelling was undertaken in early 2022 and forecasted that the downward trend would continue for the remainder of the contract. Consequently, from 1 October 2022, fees were increased from \$35 to \$57 which was the fee calculated to avoid under-recovery of

¹ The ACMA does not recover the GST component of its contract with ZOAK from users of the Numbering System.

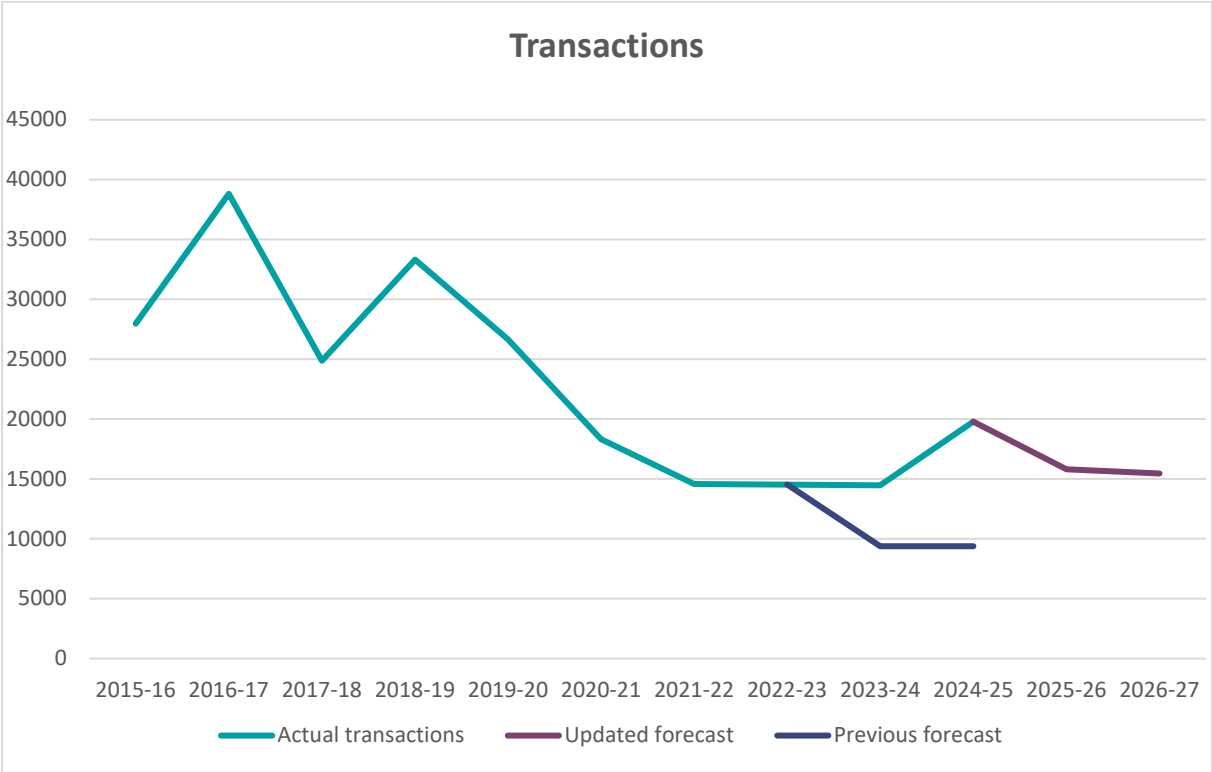
costs and achieve cumulative neutral cost recovery by matching total revenues (historical and forecast) and total costs.

Table 2: Chargeable transactions by year 2015–25

	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25
Geographic number transactions	47	50	50	39	35	36	28	20	18	18
Mobile number transactions	7	8	8	15	9	3	3	9	7	7
FLRN transactions	24,853	35,805	21,664	30,804	24,328	15,837	12,525	12,700	12,757	18,007
Other number allocations	138	88	336	9	3	3	2	-	-	4
Account registration	2,921	2,861	2,812	2,457	2,299	2,436	2,020	1,807	1,688	1,745
Total	27,966	38,812	24,870	33,324	26,674	18,315	14,578	14,536	14,470	19,781
Change from previous year		39%	-36%	34%	-20%	-31%	-20%	-0.3%	-0.5%	37%

Actual transaction numbers decreased marginally in 2022–23 and 2023–24, continuing the downward trend, but by less than forecast (Figure 1). In 2024–25, transactions increased significantly by 37%, leading to higher-than-expected revenue and by 30 June 2025, there was surplus of revenue compared to costs for 2024–25 of \$770,989 (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Transactions: actual, previously forecast and updated forecast

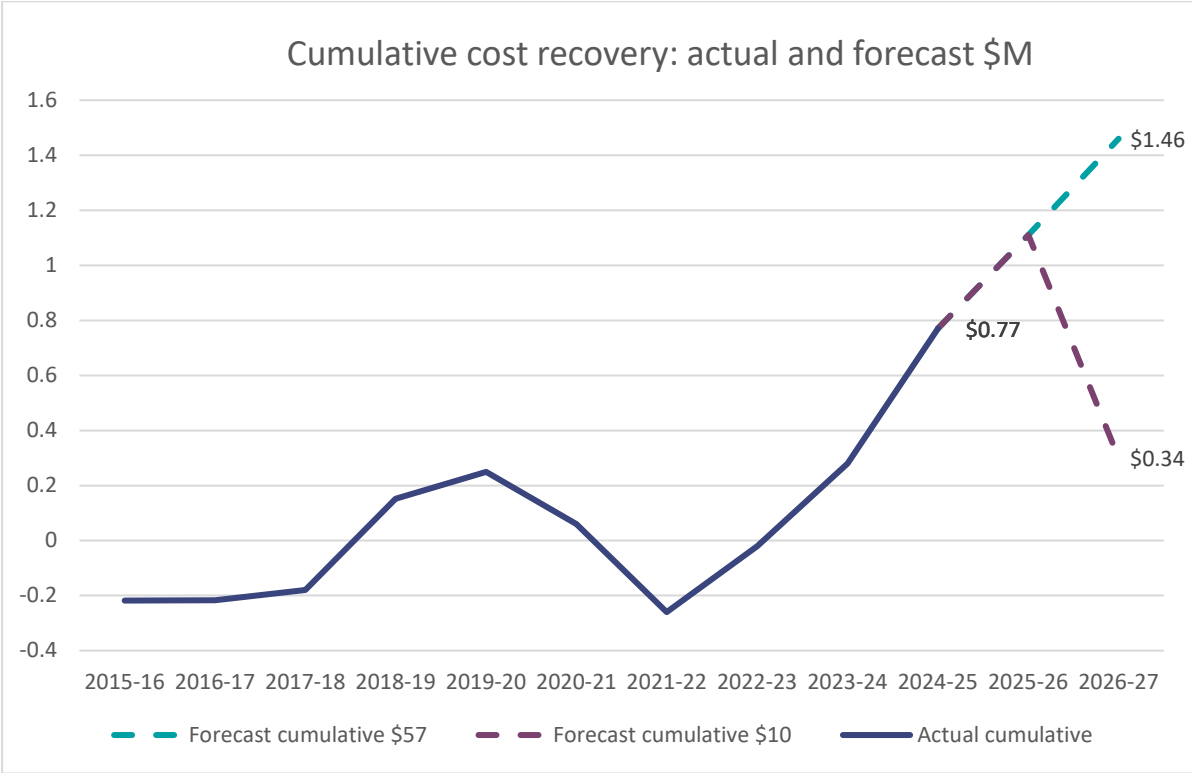


Following the unexpected increase of transactions in 2024–25, we have updated our modelling for transaction demand for the Numbering System and expect that the number of

transactions in 2025–26 and 2026–27 will be higher than previously forecast at 15,814 and 15,456 transactions each year, respectively.

Based on these updated transaction forecasts, if the current fee of \$57 is maintained, the cumulative cost recovery position at 30 June 2027 will be a surplus of \$1.46 m (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Cumulative cost recovery: actual and forecast



Proposed new transaction charge

To reduce the forecast over-recovery, the ACMA is proposing a significant reduction in the transaction fee for the Numbering System from \$57 to \$10 from 1 July 2026. This is expected to decrease the cumulative over-recovery from \$1.46m to \$0.34m by 30 June 2027 (Figure 2).

The expected \$0.34 m cumulative over-recovery will be carried forward into 2027–28 and considered when determining the fees applicable to the provision of numbering system services in that and following years. New arrangements are likely to include replacement of the current Numbering System, which has reached end of life. Bringing forward the surplus will reduce the size of any fee increases expected following the introduction of the new arrangements reducing volatility of future fee movements.

Proposal 2: Increase charges for manual transactions

Mobile network code and International Signalling Point Code allocations

Mobile network code (MNC) and International Signalling Point Code (SPC) are number identifiers used by carriers and carriage service providers to ensure that telecommunications traffic is routed correctly across national and international networks.

MNCs form part of the international mobile subscriber identity (IMSI) and are used to uniquely identify a mobile network operator within a country, enabling mobile devices and

networks to recognise which operator is providing service for calls, messages and data, especially when roaming. In recent years, the ACMA has allocated 2–3 MNCs each year.

ISPCs are used within Signalling System networks to uniquely identify signalling nodes that exchange control messages between telecommunications networks, allowing calls and other services to be set up, managed and cleared across international boundaries. We allocated one ISPC in 2024–25, and one in 2025–26.

We receive detailed applications for the allocation of MNCs and ISPCs from carriers and carriage service providers. These applications are assessed manually by ACMA officers with a significant amount of time needed to determine decisions on the applications. This includes:

- assessing the application
- requesting further information and assessing responses
- drafting documents for decision by the appropriate ACMA delegate
- creation and reconciliation of invoices
- notification of allocation to the International Telecommunication Union.

Currently, carriers and carriage service providers applying for allocation of one of these codes is charged the same fee as an automated transaction in the Numbering System (\$57). The ACMA proposes to increase the allocation charge for these applications to reflect the actual effort and resources used in processing and deciding on these applications. From 1 July 2026, we propose:

- a charge of \$1,025 for an application for an MNC allocation
- a charge of \$698 for an application for an ISPC allocation.

These charges have been calculated using the ACMA hourly charge rate of \$239 and time taken to undertake activities associated with assessing each application, which are set out in Tables 3 and 4 below.

Table 3: Time taken to assess an application for a mobile network code

Business process / activity	Estimated time in minutes
Application receipt and review	15
Finance – invoice creation and reconciliation	21
Application review and request additional information	60
Internal consultation	20
Decision memo	90
Executive manager decision	20
Notify applicant and update Register of other numbers	15
Notify ITU	10
Total	251

Table 4: Time taken to assess application for an international signalling points code

Business process / activity	Estimated time in minutes
Application receipt and review	15
Finance – invoice creation and reconciliation	21
Application review and request additional information	30
Decision memo	30
Senior manager decision	30
Notify applicant and update Register of other numbers	15
Notify ITU	10
Total	151

Invitation to comment

Making a submission

We invite comments on the issues set out in this discussion paper.

- [Online submissions](#) can be made by uploading a document. Submissions in PDF, Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format are preferred.

- Submissions by post can be sent to:

The Manager
Numbering Policy and Regulation Section
Australian Communications and Media Authority
PO Box 78
Belconnen ACT 2616

The closing date for submissions is **5 pm (AEST), Tuesday 19 May 2026**.

Consultation enquiries can be emailed to numbering@acma.gov.au.

Publication of submissions

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