

Solomon Islands - Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband - Statistics and Analyses

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Abstracts

Coral Sea Cable System alleviates international bandwidth constraints

Telecommunication infrastructure in the Solomon Islands requires significant investment due to the geographical make-up of the islands. Although various international organisations such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have taken a special interest in having communication services improved in both the Solomon Islands and the Pacific region in general, internet and broadband penetration remain low. The provision of broadband infrastructure, particularly to rural areas, is also hindered by land disputes.

Internet services have, however, improved with the build-out of the Coral Sea Cable System linking Papua New Guinea to the Solomon Islands, as also with a connecting cable to a landing station at Sydney. The Australian government provided most of the funding for the Coral Sea Cable System, with contributions and support from the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea governments.

The launch of the Kacific-1 satellite in late 2019 also improved broadband satellite capacity for the region.

In recent years, the country has stabilised both politically and economically and this, along with improvements to mobile infrastructure, has led to a rise in mobile penetration and the slow uptake of broadband services. While the first LTE services were launched in late 2017 in the capital Honiara, the main platform for mobile voice and data services remains 3G, while in outlying areas GSM is still an important technology for the provision of services.

BuddeComm notes that the outbreak of the Coronavirus continues to have a significant impact on production and supply chains globally. During the coming year the telecoms sector, to various degrees, is likely to experience a downturn in mobile device production, while it may also be difficult for network operators to manage workflows when maintaining and upgrading existing infrastructure. Overall progress towards 5G may be postponed or slowed down in some countries.

On the consumer side, spending on telecoms services and devices is under pressure from the financial effect of large-scale job losses and the consequent restriction on disposable incomes. However, the crucial nature of telecom services, both for general communication as well as a tool for home-working, will offset such pressures. In many markets the net effect should be a steady though reduced increased in subscriber growth.

Key developments:

Coral Sea Cable System alleviating international bandwidth constraints, focus shifts to improving last mile connectivity;

Solomon Islands Domestic Cable Network connecting to Coral Sea Cable System;

Kacific-1 providing additional international bandwidth;

Possible amendment to the Telecommunications Act to address cyber-bullying, SIM card registration required;

Growth in mobile data consumption driven by high proportion of consumers under the age of 25;

Mobile market remaining dominated by prepaid subscribers;

Report update includes an assessment of the global impact of Covid-19 on the telecoms sector, recent market developments.

Companies covered in this report include:

Our Telekom (Breeze); Bmobile-Vodafone; Kacific Broadband Satellite, O3b,

Interchange Limited, Solomon Island Submarine Cable Company.

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