

New report confirms Fixed Wireless Access will widen broadband market, increase competition, drive down costs

The advent of 5G, additional spectrum and advances in network equipment and CPE are transforming the fixed wireless access from a 'last resort' broadband option into a viable competitive alternative, according to a new report by Mobile Ecosystem.

However, for operators looking to take advantage of the new opportunities to leverage mobile assets, the report – titled *The Business Case for Fixed Wireless Access* and commissioned by NetComm – also warns that considerations need to be made regarding making sure the service offered can compete with traditional Fixed Broadband services.

Providing a detailed analysis of the business case for fixed wireless access in different scenarios, the report highlights there is an opportunity for Fixed Wireless Access in most markets although not all in the same way. There is not one solution that fits all, it claims.

“Even with all the spectrum, technology and policy elements coming together to create the opportunity for fixed wireless to become part of the mainstream broadband mix, there is no one-size-fits all solution,” said Mark Lowenstein, Managing Director at Mobile Ecosystem and author of the report. “The business case for FWA varies not only from country to country but literally by city and neighbourhood, with key factors such as the existing fixed broadband situation, the status and cost of fiber-based solutions, population density, topography and available/planned spectrum capacity all coming into play.”

Focusing on developed country markets, primarily in the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, the report compares 5G mmWave and 5G/LTE sub-6 GHz based options. It also compares the fixed wireless access option to Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) and Fiber-to-the-distribution point (FTTdp) solutions, plotting Capital Expenditure (CapEx), Operating Expenditure (OpEx), Customer Premises Equipment (CPE), and installation variables against key market factors such as density, spectrum breadth and depth, and topography to develop a revenue model.

For dense urban markets, the report highlights that mmWave provides a good alternative, especially where there is only one fixed broadband provider and where FTTH is underbuilt or costly to install, such as many cities in the United States. Until recently, wireless could not physically or economically offer a viable alternative to fixed broadband access, but this is about to change, the report concludes.

In lower-density urban/dense suburban scenarios, the expected availability of 3.5 GHz spectrum is expected to make fixed wireless access viable in sub-6 GHz spectrum for both 5G and LTE in a number of markets, especially where there is decent density and an operator can achieve 40% or greater penetration of households. The opportunity for fixed wireless access in low density suburban / rural market is more case-by-case, the report continues, and is most compelling where the existing fixed broadband infrastructure is sub-par or lacks a compelling roadmap.

“Careful consideration also needs to be taken when it comes to CPE as it is an integral part of the overall solution and needs to ensure the speed, reliability and support required in Fixed Broadband, unlike mobile broadband,” continued Lowenstein. “AT&T in the U.S. and NBN in Australia both provide examples of major operators that have rolled out fixed wireless access



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in rural areas, while Verizon's planned launch of fixed wireless access over 5G mmWave spectrum is potentially game-changing and being closely watched by the industry."

"Fixed wireless really is going to be a significant opportunity. Although these are early days, we will see a move to see it become a viable alternative that can benefit even more customers and businesses. We believe that it will increase competition and will start giving consumers more choice everywhere. This is not going to just be limited to rural areas," said Els Baert, Director of Technology Strategy at NetComm, a leading developer of Fixed Wireless CPE devices.

"But the report is spot-on when it says there is not a one-size-fits-all approach – that is exactly why we work closely with operators to develop solutions that meet their needs," added Baert. "We have more than 10 years' experience in building Fixed Wireless CPE and have developed a range of best practices to ensure that the solution can compete with traditional fixed broadband services. Through the framework the report provides for operators and other ecosystem players the considerations needed to assess whether FWA provides a viable option for broadband in their geography, market situation, or context, we are confident many operators will see fixed wireless as a significant opportunity as we enter the 5G era."

To read the full report, visit: mwca2018.netcommwireless.com. The findings of the report will also be discussed in more detail during a Power Hour at Mobile World Congress Americas which takes place at the Los Angeles Convention Center (LACC), in Los Angeles, from Wednesday, September 12 to Friday, September 14. NetComm Wireless and Mobile Ecosystem will host the power hour in Theatre E, Concourse Hall, on Friday, September 14 at 10.30am.

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About NetComm

NetComm (ASX: NTC) is a global developer of solutions that bridge the gap between fibre and the home, device or machine. In a world where everyone's connected life matters, Fixed Wireless broadband, wireless M2M/Industrial IoT and Fibre to the Distribution Point (FTTdp) solutions are specially engineered for challenging deployments. At NetComm we understand that no one-solution fits all. Every operator, carrier and enterprise is different, so we build the right VDSL, Gfast, 4G and 5G solution to meet specific network, market and geographic conditions worldwide. Established in 1982, NetComm is a globally renowned innovator of world-first data communications technologies. www.netcommwireless.com

CONTACT:

Gloria Vincent,
Head of Communications,
NetComm Wireless,
+61-402-564-672,
gloria.vincent@netcommwireless.com