

MyNetFone calls on Government to mandate telco co-operation with virtual mobile numbers

Online Identity of Australians is at risk due to inaction by major telcos

Sydney – 21st March 2017. MyNetFone, Australia's largest provider of voice and data communications services, is today calling on Senator Mitch Fifield and the Australian Federal Government to take the regulatory steps necessary to provide Australians with new innovative tools to protect their online identity.

Virtual mobile numbers – what are they and why do consumers need them?

MyNetFone believe the introduction of virtual mobile numbers would be of significant value to Australian consumers to help secure their online identities. Mobile numbers are now commonly used for two-factor authentication to access everything from e-mail addresses to bank accounts. As consumers use this single identifier across their personal and professional online footprint, they are increasingly vulnerable to online identity fraud. Virtualised mobile numbers give people the ability to create and manage multiple online profiles, which connect to their primary mobile phone number, and can help safeguard online identity.

In remarks made at the Tech Leaders Forum 2017 today, MyNetFone CEO and co-founder Rene Sugo noted that although MyNetFone had created the technology groundwork to introduce a virtual mobile number service, which sits within the boundaries of existing laws and regulations, the major telcos are refusing to recognise the numbers - effectively blocking MyNetFone's (or any other provider's) virtual mobile number solution.

"The major telcos are refusing to recognise calls to and from virtual mobile numbers for apparent commercial reasons, and this is affecting the potential security of Australian identities online," Sugo said. "We have written to Senator Fifield to highlight this has been allowed to happen, and to have him consider mandating telcos to provide access to all mobile phone numbers – regardless of the service provider."

Currently the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has authority to allocate mobile phone numbers, as they have done for MyNetFone. But ACMA does not have authority to make them active. The Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) is powerless in this regard too.

Sugo noted: "The resistance from the major telcos is perplexing as the solution is a non-competitive one and costs them almost nothing to implement. Virtual mobile numbers don't replace existing mobile numbers, as they do not provide an access service like a conventional mobile number. They work by providing a 'firewall' around their real number when transacting online."

Virtual mobile numbers have proven successful - now it's Australia's turn!

Virtual mobile numbers are already successfully helping people in the US, UK, France, Germany and many other leading economies. In those countries, if a person has one of these 'virtual' numbers compromised, it is easy to discard it and set up an alternative.

"There have been cases where a fraudster has been able to port a person's mobile number, and then use that to gain access to all of that person's accounts," Sugo explains. "When this sort of crime occurs, the victim is not able to retrieve their accounts because they no longer have access to their mobile number. The only solution – and a highly effective way to protect a person's identity online - is to give people the ability to create and manage mobile numbers specifically for their online activities."

MyNetFone strongly urges Senator Fifield to declare mobile numbers as a designated interconnect service, forcing Australian telecommunications network operators to recognise all mobile numbers, regardless of the host service provider.

"It's disappointing that innovation like this is being allowed to be stifled," Sugo said. "What we have here is a solution that provides real benefits for Australians. This should be something that the Government is encouraging to promote our digital economy."

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About MyNetFone

MyNetFone is Australia's largest provider of hosted voice and data communications services for business, enterprise and residential users.

MyNetFone is part of the MNF Group, which owns and operates Australia's largest VoIP network and a global Tier 1 voice carrier network. The Group also includes retail brands Connexus, CallStream, PennyTel and The Buzz; and wholesale brands iBoss, Symbio Networks, TNZI and TollShield.

MNF Group was founded in 2004 and listed on the ASX in mid 2006. It has a reputation for quality, value and innovation, having won numerous awards including the Forbes Asia's 200 Best Under a Billion (2014, 2015), Deloitte Technology Fast 50 (2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2015), PC User Product of the Year (2005), Money Magazine Product of the Year (2007) and many others.

For further information about MyNetFone please visit: <http://business.mynetfone.com.au>

For further information please contact:

Sue Ralston

Einsteinz Communications

T: (02) 8905 0995ru

E: sue@einsteinz.com.au