



Association of Unified Telecom Service Providers of India

AUSPI/12/2015/036

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Subject: AUSPI's response to the TRAI Consultation Paper No.4/2015 on Compensation to the Consumers in the Event of Dropped Calls

Dear Madam,

Please refer to the above mentioned consultation paper issued by TRAI seeking comments of stakeholders.

We are pleased to enclose AUSPI's comments/ inputs to the said consultation paper and request the Authority to please take our views into consideration.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Ashok Sud
Secretary General
Mob: 9312941515

Encl: As above

Copy to :

1. Shri R S Sharma, Chairman, TRAI
2. Dr. Vijayalakshmy K Gupta, Member, TRAI
3. Shri Anil Kaushal, Member, TRAI
4. Shri Sudhir Gupta, Secretary, TRAI



AUSPI'S RESPONSE TO THE TRAI CONSULTATION PAPER NO. 4/2015 ON COMPENSATION TO THE CONSUMERS IN THE EVENT OF DROPPED CALLS

Quality of Service (QoS) is part of the Licence conditions and TSPs operate and engage in continuous quality improvement as they consider QoS to be very important for their competitiveness in the market. For monitoring the quality, regular tests are carried out, which helps them in benchmarking themselves against competitors. The dropped-call rate is one of the key performance indicators (KPI) used by the TSPs to assess the performance of their networks as it has a direct influence on the customer satisfaction

The TSPs aim at reducing the call dropped in the network by improving radio coverage, expanding the capacity of the network and optimising the performance of its elements and all these do require considerable efforts, continuous and significant investments on the part of TSPs. However, in spite of their best efforts there are various factors which affect the network performance like Power supply unreliability, RF interference and administrative/social issues related to site acquisition, sealing of sites which act as obstructions to maintaining service quality by operators.

We would also like to bring to your attention the detailed reasons that plague the network infrastructure and are beyond the control of TSPs

- **State bodies initiate actions against the towers** without any prior notices like disconnecting electricity supplies, sealing the premises and even dismantling of tower sites. They insist multiple levies like registration/installation/sharing/renewal fees, property tax, etc. considering telecom/ telecom infrastructure as a revenue-making exercise for the exchequer
- **Artificial restrictions to install towers** on educational institutions, hospitals, forest lands, historical & archaeological protected areas, and even residential areas, stringent emission norms imposed by DoT. The emission norms in India are one-tenth of the international standards.
- **Local bodies not adhering to DoT guidelines** of 2013 with regard to application process, fees & levies, multiple documentations and NOCs from different authorities, etc.
- **Restrictions imposed by State Governments and Municipalities** for wireless sites for erecting cell-sites in non-commercial areas.
- **Issues pertaining to Right of Way (RoW)** – due to non-availability of approval, operators are prevented from putting up sites.
- **Frequent fibre cuts due to infrastructure** projects are recurring phenomena in almost all circles.
- **Site outages on account of long power failures** and delay in restoration of power supply by electricity boards.
- **Interference** due to illegal wide band radio and coverage restrictions arising out of cross border spectrum interference.



Notwithstanding the above the TSPs during the last few months have been working on a continuous basis to reduce the Call drop incidence by taking various initiatives.

Efforts made by the operators to resolve the Call Drop issue:

- Special Drive test conducted by the operators to identify radio coverage shadow zones and take corrective actions
- Optimising the cell site traffic.
- Continuously adding capacity to network by way of additional sites and sectors for congestion relief by augmenting existing RF resources.
- Reach out to customers, seeking their help to identify areas where they face call drops and their suggestions on setting up mobile cell-sites.
- Offloading of the traffic to Wi-Fi
- Installation of IBS and Small cells for improving indoor coverage

Support required:

We would like to state that compensation to consumers will not resolve the issue of call drops, since the key factors resulting in the Call Drops such as non-availability of sites; ROW and spectrum constraints need to be addressed first.

This will not be the correct approach and would not help in addressing the issue of call drops rather a focused and collaborative effort of the Service provider's with support from government and TRAI is the way forward to resolve this issue.

Q1. Do you agree that calling consumers should not be charged for a call that got dropped within five seconds? In addition, if the call gets dropped any time after five seconds, the last pulse of the call (minute/second) which got dropped, should not be charged. Please support your viewpoint with reasons along with the methodologies for implementation.

Response:

No Sir. We do not agree that calling consumers should not be charged for a call that got dropped within five seconds or any time later.

The subscriber should be charged for the duration of the call session.

We would further like to submit that there are many reasons for call drops and most of them are beyond the control of the operators. However, it is the constant endeavour of the Telecom Service providers to improve the quality of service and TSPs continuously make investments in adding more sites in the network or for the upgradation of the existing sites in order to improve the coverage and capacity of the network.



Maintaining the QoS standards as prescribed by TRAI is of paramount importance to the TSPs. As the market is highly competitive and moreover the National Mobile Number Portability provides choice to customer to shift to other networks very easily. Thus TSPs are making all out efforts to give customers a good QoS standards otherwise a dissatisfied customer is a potential churn and not beneficial to the TSPs.

Therefore, in spite of the best efforts by the TSPs call drop can happen due to various reasons beyond its control hence the mechanism to compensate a customer for call drops is not desirable and not suggested at all.

Q2. *Do you agree that calling consumer should also be compensated for call drops by the access service providers? If yes, which of the following methods would be appropriate for compensating the consumers upon call drop:*

- (i) Credit of talk-time in minutes/ seconds*
- (ii) Credit of talk-time in monetary terms*
- (iii) Any other method you may like to suggest*

Please support your viewpoint with reasons along with the methodologies for implementation.

Response:

We don't agree that TSPs should compensate the Consumer for call drops. As brought out earlier in our response to Question 1 that there are many reasons for call drops which are beyond the control of the TSPs.

TRAI has posed examples of various international operators. To the best of our knowledge, the offerings of these international operators are driven by their respective competition in the market and resultant customer care strategies and not by regulation. Neither these international regimes are comparable to the situation in India where the call drops are majorly attributable to factors outside the TSPs control, e.g. unreasonable concerns amongst citizens regarding the effects of EMF radiations, imposition of unreasonable demands, restrictions, arbitrary rules by municipalities and local bodies, etc.

Therefore, it would not be reasonable to extrapolate the international situation to India and it would be out of line to mandate that the TSPs compensate their customers.

Q.3 *If the answer to the Q2 is in the affirmative, suggest conditions/limits, if any, which should be imposed upon the provision of crediting talk-time upon call drop and usage thereof.*

Not applicable in view of our response to question no. 2



Q4. *Is there any other relevant issue which should be considered in the present consultation on the issue of call drops?*

In addition to the issue raised in the Consultation paper, we request support on the following issues:

- Telecom Services & Infrastructure to be declared as Essential Services
- Uniform Enforcement of Mobile Tower policy and RoW guidelines
- Push for tower space on government land, buildings and defence land, and faster RoW approval
- Remove interference from illegal wideband radios – intra-country and cross border

- **Central, State Governments and Municipal Corporations**
 - Alignment of state policies with DoT Mobile Tower policy
 - Single window, Time bound clearance of cell sites & RoW
 - Fees to only cover administrative charges
 - Installation on Government land, buildings and Defence land
 - Supportive and affordable RoW for Fibre
 - 24/7 power supply to cell sites at Industrial rates
