



16/08/2017

ComReg Media Release - For immediate release

ComReg consults on Non-Geographic Numbers

As part of its role to manage telephone numbers, protect consumers and promote competition, ComReg is conducting a review of the following five classes of “Non-Geographic Number” (NGN): ‘1800’, ‘1850’, ‘1890’, ‘0818’ and ‘076’.

These numbers are used to provide a wide range of telephone services to consumers, such as charity helplines, telephone banking services, and utility company customer inquiry services.

ComReg’s preliminary findings suggest that there may be some issues with NGNs which are harming consumers, including:

- retail tariffs for NGN calls are not sufficiently transparent and consumers often do not know, or are unable to forecast, the likely cost of a call to an NGN;
- many consumers do not understand the differences between the five classes of NGNs; and
- retail tariffs for NGN calls can be relatively high, particularly for NGN calls made from mobile phones, and because most NGN calls are not included in consumers’ “bundles” of call minutes.

Because of this, consumers may avoid making calls to NGNs or do so only when given no other option. This means that the NGN platform is not working effectively for either the consumer or for the organisations using NGNs to provide services.

ComReg is therefore commencing a public consultation in which it proposes two regulatory measures:

1. The first proposal is to retain the ‘1800’ NGN class as Freephone (i.e. free to call from landline and mobile) and to introduce a new linked pricing tariff (“Geo-Linked”) for the 1850’, ‘1890’, ‘0818’, and ‘076’ NGNs. This would mean that a call to any of those four classes of NGN would cost the same as an equivalent call to a “Geographic Number” (e.g. a Dublin “01” or Limerick “061” number). So, if a customer’s telephone subscription includes that all calls made by that customer to Geographic Numbers are included in a “bundle” of call minutes, then under ComReg’s proposal, all calls made by that customer to NGNs would also have to be included in the same bundle of call minutes.

2. The second proposal is to reduce, over time, the five classes of NGN to two, so that consumers will more readily understand the cost of the calls they are making – i.e. to phase out the ‘1850’, ‘1890’, and ‘076’ NGN classes over 2-3 years and retain the ‘1800’ and ‘0818’ NGN classes. ComReg considers that 2-3 years should be sufficient time for users to migrate to these numbers, while minimising any costs or disruption that might result.

ComReg would like to hear from all interested parties on its proposals and will consider all submissions before deciding on next steps.

The consultation documents, an infographic and an animation that summarises our research findings and proposals are all available at www.comreg.ie/ngnreview. The consultation period will run until 12 October 2017.

ENDS

Issued by:

**Sinéad O’Donnell
Public Affairs Executive, ComReg**

Ph: 01 804 9799

Mobile: 086 195 5515

sinead.odonnell@comreg.ie