



MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC MANAGEMENT

MEDIA RELEASE

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS ON THE DRAFT TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET COMPETITION POLICY 2019

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MFEM) today released the draft *Cook Islands Telecommunications Market Competition Policy 2019* for public consultation.

The Cook Islands has been serviced by a single telecommunications operator, partly-owned by the Government, under a legislated monopoly since 1989, with limited independent oversight. While this approach has served the Cook Islands well to date, the telecommunications landscape, both here and abroad, has changed considerably since the *Telecommunications Act 1989* came into force.

Innovation and development in the telecommunications industry in the form of new services – such as the ‘app’ economy – are posing new challenges and opportunities for established regulation. The local infrastructure landscape is also changing. The Manatua Cable, which is expected to start service in mid-2020, will provide fast, reliable and affordable internet services. In addition, experience elsewhere in the world has demonstrated the benefits of competition in the telecommunications industry: for consumers through access to new services and lower service prices, and for business through new investment opportunities.

“The Government is committed to opening up the telecommunications market to competition to secure these benefits, and at the same time adapting the regulatory framework so that it is fit for purpose in this 21st Century environment”, Acting Financial Secretary Lavinia Tama, said.

The Government’s proposals in this regard are set out in the draft policy, on which the Government is seeking industry and community feedback.

“The closing date for submissions is Friday **14 June 2019**. Written submissions received by the closing date will be considered in the development of the final policy. The Government is also planning to hold a number of public forums at dates and venues to be announced. This will provide another opportunity for comment”, said Ms Tama.

The draft policy is available on MFEM’s website at <http://www.mfem.gov.ck/economics> or can be obtained by either contacting the MFEM Economics Unit on 29511 or via email at mfem.economics@cookislands.gov.ck.

Submissions can be sent to MFEM by post at PO Box 120, Avarua, via e-mail at mfem.economics@cookislands.gov.ck, or lodged in person at Level 1, MFEM Building, Avarua.

ENDS

8 May 2019