

PRESS RELEASE

URCA PUBLISHES THE DRAFT NATIONAL NUMBERING PLAN

25 May 2010

The Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA) has published the Draft National Numbering Plan (NNP) and Statement of Results from the NNP Public Consultation that was initiated under the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) in 2008. The work which is now being completed by URCA was delayed with the introduction of new electronic communications sector legislation in 2009 and the subsequent transition of the PUC to URCA, as the new regulator. This transition process resulted in the re-prioritization of some of the work already started by the PUC.

Section 79 of the Communications Act empowers URCA to regulate Telecommunications Numbering and Naming Systems, including the preparation and publication of a National Numbering Plan (NNP). This NNP makes rules pursuant to that plan for the allocation, the use and assignment of numbering resources to licensees. The NNP is also required to be in compliance with applicable international numbering standards, including relevant International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Recommendations and the North American Numbering Plan (NANP) administration practices, since The Bahamas shares the NANP “country code 1” with North America, Bermuda and other countries in the Caribbean.

URCA took over the responsibilities for the regulation and administration of numbering resources following significant central office code assignments to previously licensed service providers. To date, 145 central office codes have been assigned, providing the sector with a capacity of 1.45 million telephone numbers.

The regulation and administration of numbering is not limited to the assignment of central office codes, but also covers other numbering resources used for interconnecting domestic networks with each other and to connect such networks with foreign networks for international traffic. Hence numbering resources provide addressing systems that facilitates a customer on one provider’s network being able to communicate with customers on its own and other networks within the domestic and international environment. This includes the administration of numbering resources used for vertical services such as “*69”; short codes such as 919/911 that are used to access to emergency services; the use of resources for domestic toll free services and other services that are classified for common use across all local service provider networks; as well the administration of Number Portability that will be shortly introduced.

The NNP of The Bahamas has as its prime objective the efficient management of all numbering resources such that licensees may be assigned the resources to deliver high quality services to end users; to foster competition in the sector; and promote social and economic development throughout the country. These assignments are to be made in a non-discriminatory and transparent manner to all eligible service providers in The Bahamas. URCA believes that the NNP satisfies the objectives for the administration of numbering resources in The Bahamas and invites the sector and the general public to offer further comments. The opportunity for new comments is being extended since the legal and regulatory framework in the sector has changed and there may now be new entrants interested in becoming service providers. URCA has published the NNP as a draft document and will accept comments until 30 July 2010.

The Draft NNP document and Statement of Results, as well as other relevant documents may be found on URCA’s website at www.urbahamas.bs.