

Media release

Hon Steven Joyce

Minister for Communications and Information Technology

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New spectrum allocations proposed for new technologies, radio broadcast linking

Communications and Information Technology Minister Steven Joyce today released a discussion paper seeking input into a proposed reallocation of radio spectrum in the 806-960 MHz band.

“A reallocation of spectrum in this band will introduce greater efficiency in how the spectrum is being used, will enable new innovative technologies to be introduced, and will ease congestion for some services in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch,” says Mr Joyce.

The proposed reallocation of radio spectrum follows a review of non-cellular services in the band. Non-cellular services and applications using this frequency range are land mobile radio, fixed links including radio broadcast studio-to-transmitter links, and short-range radiocommunications. The band is also home to cellular spectrum held by Telecom, Vodafone and 2degrees Mobile.

The two main changes proposed for the band are:

- Allocating a new 8 MHz block of spectrum for radio broadcast studio-to-transmitter fixed links, and

- Changing a 6 MHz block currently used for those links to permit use by short-range devices (e.g., radio frequency identification or RFID systems, smart meters and broadband wireless access infrastructure).

The discussion paper suggests putting most of the new band for studio-to-transmitter links up for auction as 20-year rights. This would introduce market forces to the allocation of this spectrum, which has been in short supply in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. The 20-year term will also give right-holders greater certainty about their broadcast infrastructure, and the flexibility to make changes.

The government is seeking feedback on the proposals by 30 June, 2009.