

## Campaign for Unmetered Telecommunications Initial Contribution to OFTEL's 2000/01 Review of the Dialup Internet Access Market

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Please send any comments to [secretary@unmetered.org.uk](mailto:secretary@unmetered.org.uk)

We welcome the opportunity to make an initial contribution to [OFTEL's 2000/01 review of the dialup Internet access market](#).

Considering the provision of narrowband Internet access, and the market relationship between narrowband and broadband services, we believe we have no useful input at the moment for different reasons:

(i) regulated narrowband services, particularly BT SurfTime and FRIACO, are currently a long way from a stable state, particularly with the DMSU report, which will define the future direction of FRIACO, yet unpublished. For that reason, with the review process lasting eight months, we believe that anything suggested at the moment will soon be superseded by events. BT's [offering of local unmetered voice calls](#) and bundled [BT SurfTime](#) is **the most** recent abrupt change to the dialup market and it is not possible, at the moment, to **tell what** impact it will have.

(ii) regulated broadband services, which at the moment are based solely on [Ignite's](#) IP products, will probably be static until local loop unbundling, which begins to take place during the period of the review. In any case adoption of broadband services will initially be slow, with many people waiting until LLU gives, we hope, more choice and lower prices, and the currently small subscriber base and relative newness - in this country - of such services suggests there is little to examine in this review cycle.

However, there is an important issue, currently not under consideration, which we believe OFTEL must take on board.

From our contacts with a large number of Internet users we note that complaints about pricing, although far from ceased, are now taking second place to complaints about provision. At the moment anyone can set up an Internet Service Provider; ISPs are not regulated and are subject only to general contract and consumer law. Our concern is that this falls far short of what is needed. Over the past few months there have been many problems with ISPs: we have found that people are unwilling to resort to the law to resolve disputes because of cost, lack of time or reservations about becoming involved in the legal process.

The [Director-General of OFTEL has stated](#) that he wants a telecommunications ombudsman, as a form of self-regulation, to be set up by the industry. We suggest that its remit being extended to ISPs as per, for example, [Australia](#), must be examined urgently by the participants in the review.