

TCITC PUBLIC NOTICE 2008 – 5

Re: Digicel Application for Assignment of Short Codes

20 August 2008
Telecommunications Commission
Turks and Caicos Islands

Introduction

The Commission has received an application from Digicel TCI Ltd. (Digicel), for assignment of Short Codes to be used to help support and promote a Digicel initiative to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Turks and Caicos – the application itself is attached to this notice.

The Commission commends the company for the spirit and intent of this application, and wishes to provide its support to the initiative.

In response to a question from the Commission regarding the proposed use of the codes, the CEO of the company replied as follows:

Initially the short codes are to be used primarily for SMS purposes. Persons who send a text to those short codes will receive back HIV/AIDS related information. In the long term, anyone who dials any of the short codes will be taken to a single resource. The termination line will be a Digicel line and ideally I would like for it to be Toll Free – like an Emergency call.

I would like for the same code to be used for all carriers. Although the call will be terminating on Digicel lines we will not charge the other carriers for it, and I trust the other carriers will pass along the savings to the customer. We will not charge our customers for the service.

The Commission wrote to the company on July 10, 2008, outlining its concerns with the management of short codes in Turks and Caicos, stating as follows:

*As this is the first application for the use of short codes in TCI, the Commission would like to see a cooperative approach to the general management of short codes, which are likely to become an important commercial opportunity for all operators. In other jurisdictions, it is noted that the industry tends to cooperate through a committee structure that establishes a register of codes being used, and standards for their application, to avoid confusion with respect to the exchange of numbers between systems etc. In this particular case for instance, the Commission is not certain that the use of 5 codes for what appears to be a single purpose is making efficient use of numbering resources. There was also some concern that the codes proposed do not have an * to initiate the code, and one of them starts with a “1”. Further, the Commission shares your view that for an*

initiative like this, it would be essential really, that all carriers use the same code and provide the same access.

The Commission's preferred approach to this matter would be to have the operators cooperate in developing a consensus on the approach to managing short codes, and to the particular application you have advanced regarding assistance to those seeking information on HIV/AIDS. Digicel may wish to initiate this action on its own motion, and the Commission would support and encourage such an approach, but the Commission is prepared to assist if required.

The Commission invites comments from Cable and Wireless and Islandcom on this issue. If the management of short codes is to be effectively conducted, it must involve the cooperation and coordination amongst the operators. Thus, before considering this application further, the Commission would like to see if the operators can find a way to create a cooperative mechanism for managing short codes in general.

Comments or reports on discussions amongst the operators should be submitted to the Commission by November 15, 2008.