

To: Productivity Commission

From: Joe Greco, founder of fishing weather website www.fishranger.com.au

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I am writing in relation to fees charged by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) Australia to access forecast weather data sets. At present we have a situation where BoM produce high grade forecast data for the Australian continent and surrounding region but charge high fees to access to that data. Consequently many websites and weather apps do not use BoM forecast data and instead use lower quality data produced by other organisations around the world which is freely available on the internet. The NOAA of America is one such organisation that produces forecast data for the entire world (including Australia) and makes it freely available.

A catalogue and list of fees charged by BoM for its data services can be found here:
<http://reg.bom.gov.au/other/charges.shtml>

As a start up business that provides detailed weather forecasts for recreational fishermen across the country, **Fish Ranger currently spends \$13,400 per annum on BoM data access** which is its single greatest fixed cost. It is a real challenge to compete with other websites and apps that do not use BoM forecast data.

Many of these other sites state they use 'BoM Data' to gain credibility but in reality they only use observational data from BoM (ie actual measurements from weather stations which are cheap) and not forecast data which is expensive.

I have three concerns with the current high data cost arrangement:

- 1) The high data cost is a significant financial hurdle to overcome for new internet based businesses which operate at low margins due to public expectations of freely available data on the internet. This discourages innovation of new sites that would serve high quality weather data to different user groups around the country if the data was cheaper or free.
- 2) Through taxes the Australian public fund development of the best forecast data for Australia but do not realise the benefits of it due to the proliferation of apps and sites that do not use BoM forecast data due to its high cost.
- 3) Accurate weather forecasts are a safety concern and many recreational boaters are endangering themselves by trusting inferior weather forecast data when they make decisions on whether or not they should go out on the water.

Here is a list of popular weather sites and apps used by fishermen which do not use BoM forecast data:

- Windfinder
- Buoyweather
- Seabreeze
- Willyweather (Wave & Swell forecasts not from BoM)
- Windy
- WindyTV

- Wind Guru
- Wind Junky
- Predict Wind

To provide some specific information to facilitate discussion with BoM if required, the three significant forecast data sets produced by BoM are ADFD, ACCESS and AUSWAVE. These are the most accurate data sets for the Australian continent and surrounding region available anywhere in the world. The NOAA in America produce the GFS and WaveWatch forecast data sets which are direct substitutes for the data available from BoM but are less accurate (The reason they are less accurate is because they have lower resolution and are not quality controlled by meteorologists as the BoM data is).

The number of Australian's that rely on these detailed forecast data sets comprises of anyone who participates in recreational water sports including fishing, surfing, yachting, kite surfing, water skiing, paddle boarding, jet skiing, diving, snorkelling. In addition, people who work outdoors, people involved in event planning and industries dependent on weather such as construction also rely heavily on these detailed data sets. As you can see this is not specialised data used only by a few people around the country, the user groups affected by this constitute the majority of Australians.

In terms of safety, the millions of dollars spent annually on safety campaigns and search and rescue due to hazardous weather situations could be reduced if more Australian's used better forecast weather data.

I would like the productivity commission to review charges for BoM forecast data and ideally make it free to encourage innovation and to enable more Australians to realise the benefits of better weather forecasts.

Regards,
Joe Greco