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NBN Co plans to boost Fixed Wireless to 250-400Mbps speeds

NBN Co plans to offer fibre-like speeds on its fixed wireless network from next year with 100Mbps universal speed availability and up to 400Mbps across most of the footprint.

Under the proposal, the existing NBN Fixed Wireless Plus wholesale speed tier would increase from maximum speeds of 75/10Mbps to 100/20 Mbps, a change which would apply to all Fixed Wireless Plus services across the NBN wireless network footprint.

Pending a consultation, NBN aims to introduce the enhancements to the NBN Fixed Wireless Plus plan in early 2024. According to the telco, 60% of fixed wireless customers take this plan presently.

For the two additional wholesale high-speed tiers that NBN plans to launch, NBN is now intending to double their speeds to fibre-like speeds.

Fixed Wireless Home Fast is planned to increase from 100-130/8-20Mbps to 200-250/8-20Mbps, available to around 90 percent of the NBN fixed wireless coverage area. Fixed Wireless Superfast would increase from 200-325/8-20Mbps to 400/10-40Mbps, available to around 80 percent of the NBN fixed wireless coverage area.

If consultations are successful, NBN Co said it plans to make the two new speed tiers available from mid-2024.

NBN Co's chief technology officer, wireless networks Jason Ashton said: "Following extensive testing of upgraded areas of the network, we believe we can deliver even better NBN services to consumers on the fixed wireless network, which is why we are considering new options that are aimed at improving the speeds that customers can access on the upgraded NBN fixed wireless network."

"Our fixed wireless services are available from a range of Australian phone and internet providers. We also offer professionally installed NBN equipment to providers, so customers can be reassured that if something happens with your NBN equipment, we will come and fix it."

The upgrades are being enabled by the previously announced \$750 million wireless investment program comprising \$480 million from the Australian Government



Jason Ashton

and \$270 million from NBN Co.

The first upgraded parts of the network are being launched today in the south coast of NSW and the Sunshine Coast in Queensland covering 16,000 homes, including over 3,000 which could previously only access satellite services. The planned expansion of the wireless network and resulting shrinkage of the satellite footprint is being used to also increase the speeds of the Sky Muster service: as CommsDay reported yesterday, NBN Co is planning a 100Mbps satellite service, as well as uncapped plans at the 25Mbps and 50Mbps levels.



Michelle Rowland

Communications minister Michelle Rowland will announce today that more than 2,300 fixed wireless sites will be upgraded across the country. Following the program's commencement in July 2022, the upgrades to the NBN fixed wireless network will have increased total network capacity by 100 percent by the end of November this year, and current capacity is expected to double, she is expected to say.

Rowland says: "These upgrades are the first of many, with the fixed wireless upgrade program expected to be completed by the end of 2024."

Rowland will launch the upgrades today at a press event in Batemans Bay.

As of last week, NBN Co has just over 398,000 activated fixed wireless customers from a potential footprint of 685,000.

As part of the managed transition, the wireless footprint has expanded by nearly 40,000 premises this calendar year, with the satellite footprint falling by around 27,000 over the same period.

Telstra has about a 52% market share of NBN's fixed wireless subs, followed by TPG on 13%, Aussie Broadband on 11% and Vocus on 9%. The next biggest fixed wireless RSPs are Optus, Australian Private Networks and Southern Phone.

Grahame Lynch

1510Tbps of new transPac capacity on way – and that was before Google's cable announcements

New analysis of the submarine cable market shows that transPacific bandwidth capacity is set to grow from around 720Tbps currently to 2230Tbps within four years—and that was calculated before the announcement of two new Google cables connecting Australia with the US last week.

The latest Submarine Telecoms Industry Report from WFN Strategies and SubTel Forum makes the conservative estimate of 1510Tbps of new capacity based on the announcements of seven new cables including Echo, Topaz and Hawaiki Nui. Another three announced cables on the route including Bifrost and Humboldt have yet to declare their planned design capacity.

The analysis was completed before Google's announcement with Vocus of its South Pacific Connect plans last week. Although there was no announced design capacity for these cables, they could be reasonably expected to add as much as another 500Tbps or more to the mix.

According to the report, “there are eight planned systems scheduled to be ready for service between 2024 and 2027 in the transPacific market.”

“Of these, 37.5% have reached the Contract in Force milestone, a noticeable decline from last year’s 44%. The majority of these systems aim to significantly boost capacity along their respective routes, although many are vying for the same or similar pathways. The average system length for all planned transPacific systems is approximately 13,850 kilometre, making shorter route lengths and reduced latency key considerations for new entrants.”

“Several systems that have not yet achieved CIF status are backed by hyperscalers, effectively removing them from direct competition with other planned systems and mitigating some of the financial risks associated with securing outside investment,” the report continued. “Given the renewed interest in the transPacific region, fueled by rising bandwidth demands from cloud services, this area is expected to experience growth rates comparable to those in the transAtlantic market,” it added.

The report also includes commentary from Ian McLean, a senior executive with APTelecom, which is involved with the new Google cables in a consultancy role. He writes that five of proposed new systems alone will supply nearly 60 new fibre pairs across the Pacific.



Ian McLean

McLean observes that such a surfeit of new capacity may lead to substantial price erosion and in the first instance, may threaten the sustainability of system suppliers given they can only charge operators an economic amount for builds.

However, “if the demand for data connectivity across the Pacific Ocean continues to grow at a rapid pace, it may offset the downward pressure on prices, allowing providers to maintain or even increase their rates. Technologies like 5G, satellite and AI are currently playing a significant role in driving increased demand in the Asia-Pacific region,” McLean wrote.

“By 2030, the transPacific subsea market is likely to experience continual growth, technical advancements, regulatory changes, and evolving market dynamics. With the increasing appetite for data-intensive applications like 5G, AI, and IoT, demand for data capacity across the transPacific route will continue to grow significantly. Geopolitical factors are also at play and could influence the development of cable systems as countries become more protective of their infrastructure and data traffic.”

Grahame Lynch

More, Tangerine introduce eSim

Sister telcos More and Tangerine are introducing eSIM capability to their mobile product from tomorrow.

CEO Andrew Branson said “Our new eSIM capability allows our customers to connect seamlessly and conveniently without the need to collect a SIM from a store or wait for it to arrive in the mail. No more never-ending searches to find a pin to open the SIM card tray.”

eSIM technology allows users to activate their devices quickly and easily via a QR

code scan, removing the need to visit a physical store or wait for a SIM card to be delivered.

“Our eSIM capabilities extend beyond hassle-free and fast activation – they also provide customers with a host of other benefits: the ability to use multiple phone numbers on a single eSIM-enabled device, no fiddly SIM swaps when travelling overseas and improved security features,” Branson said.

“eSIM technology also contributes to environmental conservation by minimising plastic waste and lowering the overall carbon footprint,” he added.

Eligible CommBank customers can also continue to take advantage of the bank’s strategic relationship with More with three months of free mobile plan fees if they sign up and continue to use a CommBank debit or credit card as their online bill payment method.

Tangerine and More source their mobile services from Telstra.

Telstra InfraCo executive Kathryn Jones touted the availability of eSim in its mobile phone offering at CommsDay’s Wholesale Congress last month, pointing out that it allowed MVNOs to extend services to devices such as wearables and smartwatches.

Staff reporter



Andrew Branson

Telstra’s brand appeal strong younger Australians: CMO

Telstra has strong brand appeal among younger Australians but must work to win back the trust of older consumers, according to the company’s CMO Brent Smart.

In an interview with marketing and advertising industry website Mi3, Smart said he has learned much during his first year in the CMO role at Telstra, including the importance of re-engaging former customers.

“When I joined Telstra, I’ll be honest, I thought, ‘that’s my mum and dad’s brand’. I thought we’re going to have a real challenge with younger customers. It’s the opposite. Our brand reputation is incredibly strong with young customers. Our engagement rates on TikTok are amazing for brand like Telstra. We’re doing a really good job with younger customers. And yet older customers have a more negative perception of us,” he said.

“It says we’ve got a group of people who used to be customers at a time when we weren’t as customer-focused. They are still sort of carrying that reputational baggage around the Telstra brand. They are not experiencing these CX improvements ... [so] the only way you can move that perception of those non-customers is through brand.”

The need to win back older, former customers was a major motivation behind the company’s new This is Footy Country brand campaign, Smart told Mi3. The focus on



Brent Smart

AFL and rural Australia re-enforces Telstra's rich heritage and seeks to increase its appeal among older Australians.

"We've always had a big presence in country Australia and we just felt that country footy is the lifeblood of these communities," Smart said. "So we felt it was a place we could really own – and a space that could lead to some really creative storytelling."

Early feedback suggests the campaign is achieving its desired objectives, Smart said. Now the company is working on its longer-term branding, including new brand assets that can be committed to over time.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

Former Telstra exec Iain Little starts consultancy

Former Telstra regulatory executive Iain Little has struck out on his own with a new telco sector consultancy called Flat Rock Consulting.

Little took redundancy from Telstra after a 16 year career there last August. He finished up in the position of Strategic Policy and Regulatory Lead, having previously served in senior economic and competitive analysis positions.

Flat Rock Consulting already has its first client, Quantum Telstra.

Little told CommsDay that Flat Rock's point of difference was its ability to bring people together to find solutions to common problems.

"In the most recent times at Telstra, I was really focused on bringing parts of the industry together to solve critical problems. Scam, for instance, is a good example. ASIC reported that customers had lost over \$558 million through scams. And then in the following year, I was a big part of Telstra and the rest of industry's action where we ended up blocking 750 million calls and 250 million messages. What a great industry response to a customer problem that was," he told CommsDay.



Iain Little

"We can add value through helping different parts of the industry come together to solve those types of problems that they face and also maybe bringing a different perspective for companies that are pretty used to doing some things the same way," he added. "We can work with government and the regulators, develop the policy and regulatory responses to these sorts of things and help industry manage that."

Little pointed to his experience on the board of Communications Alliance for six years and also helping put together the alliance of five RSPs several years ago which lobbied—ultimately successfully— for a better deal from NBN Co.

"So we got everyone together and pulled together a case to change. And it was hard for that group at the outset to argue to get the change, to get the incentive for the decision makers and the stakeholders to actually agree that change was needed, but we managed to do that. And then that obviously set the SAU process in motion."

"Trying to find solutions and answers to these sorts of problems that organisations face when they have an incredibly involved policymaker and regulators in the industry can be quite a challenge. And hopefully, that's where I can help companies make change helpful to them," he said.

In terms of coming hot button issues, Little said: “I think USO is obviously the hot topic at the moment, just with the recent announcements. And that’ll be a highly engaging debate from a policy perspective, just because there’s so many interests in that from the basis of, well, what do consumers need in that space? But I think one of the big challenges that the sector is going to face over the next years is how to protect consumers from those ongoing risks around fraud and scam and actors causing harm to consumers.”

He added: “I also think there’s an opportunity there to really celebrate more what the comms sector really generates in terms of the productivity improvements that the economy benefits from, has benefited from, and how the new advancements and the new technologies that all the telcos and comms companies are bringing into the market are building on that and delivering better, more fantastic outcomes for consumers.” Sydney-based Little is a trained economist and joined Telstra in 2005 from CRA.

Grahame Lynch

Netlinkz revenue grows 34% in September quarter

Network-as-a-service provider Netlinkz grew its revenue for the September quarter by 34% to \$6 million year-on-year as the company expanded its international footprint and secured new financing.

Revenue from the company’s satellites division, which sells enterprise-grade Starlink services bundled with the company’s Virtual Secure Network (VSN) NaaS offering, increased from \$1 million in the prior quarter to \$1.9 million.

To date Netlinkz has signed partnership agreements with companies including Data#3 and Cello Group for Australia, Spark and Kordia for New Zealand, PT&T for the Philippines and Telespazio for Latin America.

Netlinkz is also partnering with HGC Global Communications to build a NaaS platform for enterprises based on VSN, with the partnership expected to officially launch on 15 November.

Meanwhile revenue from the company’s SSI Telecom Surveillance division, which provides solutions for telcos to meet their regulatory requirements to enable lawful interception, increased slightly during the quarter to around \$800,000. The China Network Engineering Solutions business also increased its revenue by 12% year-on-year to \$3.2 million.

During the quarter, Netlinkz built the foundation to pursue new sales opportunities across Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Dubai and Chile. This included product development tasks with partner Dipole for a Starlink VSN customer support function, including an online portal and service desk.

Netlinkz revealed earlier this month that it had executed a convertible securities facility agreement to raise up to \$10 million. This followed the issuance of a second senior note facility in September to raise up to \$12 million.

Netlinkz CEO and MD James Tsiolis said the company had made strong progress during the quarter. “It is encouraging to have the support of a new funding partner, Obsidian, to help us deliver on our significant and varied growth opportunities.”

Dylan Bushell-Embling

Indicium Dynamics-led team entering XPRIZE Wildfire Challenge

Tasmanian IoT business Indicium Dynamics is teaming up with three fellow technology companies to establish team Fire Foresight and compete in the XPRIZE Wildfire Challenge.

Indicium has established Fire Foresight along with drone technology company Taz Drone Solutions, UK-based space analytics company Little Place Labs and Hong Kong headquartered wildfire detection and environmental monitoring product developer Robotics Cats.

During the four-year challenge, the Indicium platform will be used to centralise data from a range of sources and orchestrate smooth interaction between different technological components involved in a space-based bushfire monitoring solution.

The XPRIZE Wildfire Challenge aims to help put an end to destructive wildfires. It includes two competition tracks, with the first focused on space-based wildfire detection and intelligence. In the finals, competitors in this track will have one minute to accurately detect all fires across a large landscape, and 10 minutes to precisely categorise and report data.

The second category is focused on autonomous wildfire response. Finalists in this category will have 10 minutes to autonomously detect and suppress a high-risk fire in a 1,000 km², environmentally challenging area.

Indicium's new CEO Rob Vernon told CommsDay Team Fire Foresight will be entering both challenges. Little Place Labs will focus on detecting wildfires from space, Taz Drone will lead the wildfire response, Robotics Cats will provide an alternative fire detection option, and Indicium will play a coordination and orchestration role as well as contributing its terrestrial fire detection capabilities.

Vernon said collaboration is key to solving problems like wildfires. "Big challenges require big thinking and no one business is capable solving the worlds problems, collaboration must be the default setting," he said. "Indicium Dynamics is uniquely positioned, as an integration engine, to combine the technologies of numerous companies to provide orchestration and focus in tackling many of the worlds big climate issues."

As previously reported in CommsDay, Vernon recently joined Indicium from TasmaNet, where he was CEO.

The XPRIZE Wildfire prize purse totals US\$11 million (\$17.2 million), with US\$3.5 million to be awarded to the winners of each track, a further US\$3 million in milestone prizes to be awarded across both tracks, and US\$1 million awarded to one or more eligible teams across both tracks whose competition entries successfully demonstrate accurate, precise, and rapid detection.

Dylan Bushell-Embling

Data#3 plans four month transition to new CEO

The CEO of Australian IT company Data#3 is to step down after 29 years with the firm.

Laurence Baynham is quitting in March 2024, to be replaced by current EGM of Software, Infrastructure & Services Brad Colledge after a four month transition peri-

od. Baynham has been CEO for nine years and with the company since 1994.

“We have had a succession plan in place for several years, and the board has worked on the plan in great detail in recent months,” Baynham said yesterday.

“Brad joined the company in 1995, just one year after I did, and has an extensive knowledge of the business. He started the Software Licensing Solutions business in 1997 and in 2014 he expanded his remit to the Infrastructure Solutions business and more recently the Services line of business. Brad also represents the company on key vendor Global Partner Advisory Councils and executive engagements. He is highly regarded across the business and by the rest of the senior leadership team and Board.”

Baynham was only the third CEO of the business in 40 years.

“Since my appointment, as CEO, you will be aware that the business has seen significant financial growth and return to shareholders. I am pleased that we have grown revenues more than 300% from \$833 million to over \$2.5 billion; profit by nearly 500% from \$7.5 million to \$37 million; and grown our market capitalisation from \$107 million to over \$1 billion today. I am also pleased to report that my tenure as CEO represented a Total Shareholder Return of 1781% and I thank all shareholders that have been with us on this journey.”

Staff reporter

AUCloud founder steps down

AUCloud founder Phil Dawson is stepping down from the executive director role of the company he founded.

Dawson said yesterday: “For family reasons, after establishing AUCloud and over five years full-time living in Canberra, I have made the decision to spend more time in the UK. Unfortunately, the reality is that this decision isn’t compatible with the more than full-time challenge of a leadership role in a scale-up business based in Australia. Consequently, from next Easter, with the support and good wishes of board, I will be moving on from AUCloud. “

Dawson said he would “continue to support AUCloud not only in the transition to formally stepping down as an Exec Director but as a Founder and shareholder beyond; remaining committed to AUCloud, the team, our customers, our partners, our investors and the belief that there is a significant place for a sovereign infrastructure and cyber security capability.”

He added: “I am incredibly proud of the business that I founded and continue to be hugely excited for its future. From the early days of a blank sheet of paper, the building of the embryonic team before moving to Canberra and encouraging a group of smart risk takers to participate as disrupters, we have helped move the needle of sovereign resilience through our activities and support for many Australian cyber and technology start-ups.”

AUCloud managing director Peter Maloney said yesterday: “The notice period allows for Mr Dawson to continue to work with the board, the CEO and the AUCloud senior leadership team for an effective transition. Mr Dawson moved to Canberra from the UK in 2017 and founded AUCloud, and has led every aspect of the company from its formative stages, through to its eventual ASX listing in December 2020 and since February 2023 transition from the CEO role to executive director.”

“The board and I would like to thank Phil for his outstanding contribution to company’s employees, customers, partners, suppliers and for his active role in both government relations and the broader cloud services industry, which has helped shaped AUCloud into being a leading provider of cloud and cyber security solutions to Government agencies, critical national infrastructure and the broader enterprise market.”

Staff reporter

Boost founder laments 5G as a disaster

The founder of MVNO Boost Mobile has described 5G wireless technology as a complete disaster that lacks a positive return on investment.

Peter Adderton, who launched Boost in both the US and Australia, and now helms US MVNO Mobile X told the Australian tech website EFTM that ““5G is a complete and utter disaster and is basically just creating more capacity.”

He said that 5G had done little for telcos. “You know what it’s done for them? Cost ’em a hundred billion dollars to buy all the spectrum and to build a network. There’s no ROI (return on investment). So you can’t run a business where there’s no return on investment. And 5G has not created the return on investment.”

He continued: “All the things that they promised. Go back and look at all the quotes that Andy Penn and everybody else said, drones and autonomous surgery and cars. And none of that’s eventuated, and so now what they’re doing is they’re moving to fixed wireless, replacing the cable guy.”

“There’s no killer app for 5G. I’ve been saying that from day one.”

Staff reporter

Global cloud spend top US\$68bn in Q3, up US\$10.5bn yoy

Enterprise spending on cloud infrastructure services reached US\$68 billion worldwide in the third quarter of 2023, up by US\$10.5 billion over the same period a year earlier, according to Synergy Research Group.

The fifth consecutive quarter of over US\$10 billion year-on-year growth shows “clear evidence” that generative AI technology and services are starting to help overcome global challenges, including the current economic and political climate hampering cloud spending, SRG remarked.

“Q3 spending was up by 5% from Q2, substantially higher than the quarter-on-quarter growth rate seen in the previous two quarters,” the researchers said. “Excluding the seasonal peaks always seen in Q4, the sequential growth in cloud spending was the highest it has been since 2021.”

Microsoft was highlighted as the strongest performer year-on-year, gaining nearly 2 percentage points to account for 23% of the market during the year.

Amazon remained the clear leader however with its market share remaining in its “long standing market share band of 32%-34%,” while Google edged up 1% to hold 11% of the market. Together, the top three cloud providers accounted for 66% of the worldwide cloud market, a figure that rises to 72% when counting exclusively public

cloud services.

Among the tier two cloud providers, those with the highest year-on-year growth rates include Oracle, Snowflake, MongoDB, VMware, Huawei and China Telecom. Geographically, the cloud market continues to grow strongly in all regions of the world. When measured in local currencies the APAC region had the strongest growth, with India, China, Australia and Japan all growing by 20% or more year over year.

“While the law of large numbers continues to exert downward pressure on cloud market growth rates, AI is giving the market an added boost,” SRG added.

Tony Chan

India’s HFCL unveils a deluge of new projects, including a home-grown FWA CPE

India solutions vendor HFCL has launched a slew of products covering 5G, IP transport, radios and optical fibre solutions.

Announced at the India Mobile Congress, HFCL’s portfolio now includes a new 5G fixed wireless access customer premise equipment, IP MPLS routers, a new 2Gbps unlicensed band radio and a new 1728-high fibre count intermittently bonded ribbon optical fibre cable solution.

According to HFCL, the 5G FWA CPE will support multiple variants in both outdoor and indoor deployment scenarios. “Built to complement wired broadband connections in areas where fibre rollout is limited, HFCL’s range of 5G FWA CPE support both 5G SA and NSA technologies across multiple Sub-6GHz and mmWave frequency bands to offer cost-effective and fibre-like speeds to customers using the 5G network,” the company said.

HFCL said the solution will also help solve last-mile connectivity challenges in other global markets.

Tony Chan

CISCO, FUJITSU COMBINE TO CUT KDDI METRO NET POWER BY 40%

Cisco and Fujitsu have combined their solutions to deliver a 40% power saving on a metro network solution being deployed by Japan’s KDDI. The solution combines Cisco’s NCS5500 series routers, which can directly transmit and receive optical signals from wavelength division multiplexing systems, and Fujitsu’s 1FINITY optical transmission systems, a solution that leverages an open interface to link up third party equipment. According to the companies, the solution miniaturises the WDM transponder, which traditionally was installed as a separate device between the WDM system and router.

ZOOM CLAIMS 1M AI COMPANION RESULTS

Zoom has given an update on the adoption progress of its generative artificial intelligence assistant, Zoom AI Companion, which has now been deployed by 125,000 accounts. In less than two months since its launch, Zoom said the solution has generated more than 1 million meeting summaries. At the same time, Zoom said it has also added new capabilities and additional language support in the assistant.

10 YEARS AGO IN COMMSDAY

NBN Co's annual report for 2013 reveals that none of the firm's senior executives took home short-term incentives or bonus payments in the fiscal year, an abrupt change from the contentious A\$640,000-plus paid out in 2012. And in a covering letter tabled along with the report, new NBN Co stakeholder ministers Malcolm Turnbull and Mathias Cormann have clearly signalled a crackdown on the metrics used to evaluate the progress of the project.

Reports that Federal attorney-general George Brandis had overruled a push by other senior ministers to relax a ban on Huawei's involvement in the NBN have triggered heated debate, with Huawei itself saying it understands no decision have yet been made on the subject pending the ongoing NBN reviews.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's proposed broadband monitoring program will likely be complex, costly and provide little if any benefit to ISPs, according to Telstra with Optus also expressing its concerns. So far, though, the ACCC looks set to stick to its guns.

Alcatel-Lucent will today launch its global innovation program, ngConnect, in Australia, at an industry event in the NBN Discovery Centre in North Sydney.

LATEST SHARE PRICES

Company name	Chg %	Last price	Change	Volume	Market cap
Aussie Broadband Limited	+0.51%	3.9200	+0.0200	451,187	937.699M
Comms Group Limited	0.00%	0.0750	0.0000	13,085	28.764M
Chorus Limited	+1.70%	6.59	+0.11	435,873	2.867B
Field Solutions Holdings Limited	0.00%	0.0490	0.0000	45,205	37.423M
Global Data Centre Group	+1.00%	2.0200	+0.0200	31,475	156.091M
Hutchison Telecommunications (Australia) Limited	0.00%	0.0300	0.0000	26,000	407.175M
Macquarie Technology Group Limited	+2.16%	62.32	+1.32	6,749	1.517B
Megaport Limited	-0.52%	9.51	-0.05	780,222	1.522B
NEXTDC Limited	+0.17%	11.75	+0.02	891,128	6.058B
Superloop Limited	0.00%	0.6100	0.0000	201,216	299.617M
Spark New Zealand Limited	+0.22%	4.5500	+0.0100	755,406	8.394B
Swoop Holdings Limited	-2.44%	0.2000	-0.0050	53,616	41.642M
Symbio Holdings Limited	-2.14%	2.7500	-0.0600	177,515	236.528M
Telstra Group Limited	+0.26%	3.8100	+0.0100	17.559M	44.022B
TPG Telecom Limited	+1.97%	5.18	+0.10	704,267	9.631B
Vonex Limited	+11.11%	0.0200	+0.0020	471,008	7.236M
Webcentral Limited	-3.64%	0.2650	-0.0100	3,081M	87.218M

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