



ISSUE **14**
SUMMER 2015

acan

Australia's peak body for communications consumers



THIS EDITION:
Telco tricks

Did early termination fees magically disappear?

Positive Penguins

We chat to one of the winners of the Apps For All Challenge

All about apps

We reveal our research into Australians' use of smartphones and apps

PLUS: How to use less data on your smartphone | Standards in English to Auslan online translations

ACCAN: our story

ACCAN is the peak organisation representing all consumers on communications issues including telecommunications, broadband and emerging new services. Our mission is to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of communications services for all Australians.

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Our CEO: Teresa Corbin

Upon the release of the iPhone 6 in September, ACCAN witnessed a price war in telco land, with offers of early termination fee waivers and cash for trade-ins of old handsets. In our feature article we examine the value of these offers and give our take on new mobile data sharing plans from Optus and Telstra. The article, on **page 6**, also gives advice on how to pick a phone plan that will suit your needs.

Our news section will give you an overview of our activities and industry news over the last few months including the winners of the Apps For All Challenge, our National Survey results, as well as updates on the Do Not Call Register, scammers who pose as Telstra representatives and our Digital Business Kit, Digital Ready. On **page 10** we have an interview with the developers of Positive Penguins, one of the winning apps from the Apps For All Challenge.

At the CommsDay Congress in October we launched exciting new research into Australians' use of mobile applications. With 91 per cent

stating that they own a smartphone, chances are you have downloaded a mobile app at some point. The research revealed some interesting facts about how we use smartphones in Australia and security and privacy concerns when it comes to apps that may access personal information. Check out a summary of the findings in our infographic on **page 8**.

Our policy section covers proposed updates to the TCP Code while the grants article focuses on a project aiming to develop standards for online English to Auslan translations. The member's article, on **page 14**, profiles the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), an organisation that represents community broadcasters across the country, including radio and television stations.

As always, if you have any comments, suggestions or feedback, please email ceo@accan.org.au or call me on 02 9288 4000 / TTY 02 9281 5322.

Warm regards,
Teresa Corbin
ACCAN CEO

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We chat to CBAA General Manager, Jon Bisset



ACCAN's third National Survey showed that mobile phones are now the definitive universal communications service preferred by Australians, with 98 per cent of respondents owning a mobile.

Eighty-six per cent said they have a home internet connection, while the number of fixed line phone services continued to drop this year.

"Since we commissioned our first National Survey in 2012 we've seen a significant increase in mobile phone ownership and consistent decreases in the use of fixed landline services," said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin. "This isn't surprising as smartphone usage continues to grow and many consumers don't see the need to pay for a

fixed line service anymore."

The survey revealed that Telstra remains dominant for fixed line services and home internet, but its lead was less pronounced in the mobile market.

In line with the 2013-14 Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) Annual Report, the survey found that when respondents received an unexpectedly high bill, almost half said it was due to excess data charges. The TIO Annual Report showed a 27.2 per cent increase in complaints about excess data charges.

The survey also explored how consumers interact with their telco provider. To access the full survey results visit the ACCAN website.



Scammers posing as Telstra reps

In August, Telstra warned consumers to be aware of telemarketing calls from scammers who claim to be from the Telstra Tech Department.

The scammers try to obtain personal banking details and steal the consumer's identity. If you receive a call where the caller requests bank account

details, personal details or access to your computer you should treat it as suspicious.

One example of these fake telemarketing calls came from a Sydney resident named Patrick who received a call from an overseas number on his landline phone, despite

his number being on the Do Not Call Register.

Upon questioning, the caller said his name was Jordan and claimed to be from the Telstra Tech Department. The purpose of the call was to advise Patrick that his internet connection would be cut off due to corrupted software on his computer that was infecting the network.

During the conversation Jordan provided a staff ID number and a return phone number. Both of these were later determined to be fake.

Telstra has recently launched a new campaign called "Is it really Telstra calling?" to raise awareness and provide information on these scammers.

If you receive a suspicious call, don't divulge any personal details to the caller. A good course of action is to hang up and give your telco a call to report the suspicious call. You will be able to find your telco's customer service number on your bill.

You can also report suspicious calls to the ACCC via the SCAMwatch website or by contacting Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Digital Ready launches blog and case studies

ACCAN's Digital Business Kit, Digital Ready, was launched at our National Conference in September by COSBOA Executive Director, Peter Strong.

Since then the offerings from the kit have been extended to include regular blog posts covering the latest trends and digital technology available to small businesses. There is also a new interactive facility to comment on the articles.

A further update is the addition of complete video case studies from small business operators: Helen Perris, a singer, songwriter and music teacher; Tim Oberg, General Manager of parkrun Australia and Leonie Smith, The Cyber Safety Lady, who give their

insights on developing online strategies, using social media and more.

Tim, Helen and Leonie all featured in the 'Connecting Small Business' session at our National Conference where they shared their experiences and the benefits of using digital technology in their businesses.

Check out the blog and case studies at digitalready.org.au. You can also follow Digital Ready on Facebook.



And the winners are...

ACCAN and the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) were proud to announce the winners of the inaugural Apps For All Challenge at the ACCAN National Conference in September.

The winners were awarded the Telstra Prize of \$1500, promotion through Telstra's social media and a mini-incubator experience with the telco's in-house app developers.

Most accessible mainstream app: ACCC Shopper

Most innovative app designed for people with disability or older Australians: OpenMi Tours

Most accessible children's app: Row Row Your Boat and Positive Penguins

Who pays for copyright infringements?

Illegal content sharing and downloading has continued to be a hot topic causing debate about who should foot the bill for any schemes introduced to combat the issue.

In a submission to the Attorney-General's Department regarding online copyright infringement, ACCAN argued that consumers should not pay the cost if the government forces internet service providers (ISPs) to spend more on trying to stop illegal downloading activities.

The submission noted that if any industry notice scheme is introduced, consumer rights need to be respected and there should never be account terminations enacted.

The issue of allowing the courts to block illegal downloading websites was also covered in our submission as there is the potential that websites not associated with illegal activities could also be subject to blocking.

Do Not Call...Ever!

On the Federal Government's Spring Repeal Day it was announced that registrations on the Do Not Call Register would become indefinite.

ACCAN celebrated this as a huge win for consumers who would no longer need to reregister for the Do Not Call Register every eight years.

"With approximately 9 million registered numbers and on average 1 million added each year, ACCAN supports the move to allow for indefinite registration," said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin. "The preference of the majority of Australians to not be contacted by telemarketers is evident in the high number of registrations."

This move by the Government will save \$6.9 million in tax payer dollars per year as there won't be a need to remind consumers to reregister or have them reregister.

Beware of telco tricks

The Australian telco market is crowded. This isn't necessarily a bad thing, because greater competition should drive consumer prices down. However, in such a competitive market, ACCAN has noticed that telcos can sometimes use tricks to get consumers over the line to sign up for expensive 24 month contracts. In our feature article we take a look at the 'special offers' used by telcos.

Early termination fee waivers

With the arrival of the iPhone 6 in September, ACCAN witnessed a price war in telco land. Optus and Telstra were fighting for centre stage.

The first trick was to make early termination fees disappear with offerings of \$200 credit to cover the costs of breaking your existing contract early. Those already with Optus or Telstra were enticed to sign up to a brand new plan with an offer to waive the last three months of your existing phone contract if you re-sign.

But what they didn't mention is that once your old early termination fee disappeared, a new one would magically appear when you sign up to the new contract. The catch is that both telcos required consumers to sign on to a new 24 month deal to access the \$200. Of course, the new contract includes a sizable early termination fee.

While it's easy to sign up to a new contract when a shiny new phone is released, ACCAN's advice is to try and avoid long term contracts that lock you in with early termination fees. You can save up to \$450 if you can afford to buy an iPhone 6 outright and go with a flexible prepaid or month-to-month offer; plus you're free to move around and find a better offer.



Handset trade-ins

Both Optus and Telstra had another trick up their sleeves to sign customers up to an iPhone 6 plan – handset trade-ins. Each telco advertised handset trade-in offerings up to \$250. When we contacted Optus it turned out they were offering even greater amounts, for example \$340 for an Apple iPhone 5s 64GB.

To get a trade-in with Telstra, customers had to go in store to get a quote. They were offering between \$200 and \$250 for a range of devices including: iPhone 5, iPhone 5s, HTC One (M8), Samsung GALAXY Note and S5, and the Sony Xperia Z2.

Don't be fooled by these trade-ins though, almost all of these models came out in the last year and even used, they sell for at least twice as much as the telcos were offering.

If you want to get the best price for your used phone look at selling it on

eBay. It's a little more work, but you can usually make at least \$100 extra on your device compared to a telco trade-in. In September ACCAN compared the price for a functioning iPhone 4 16GB in good condition at the Apple Store, Optus and on eBay.

Apple offered a measly \$80. Optus wasn't much better, offering \$90. When we looked at eBay we found that people were selling iPhone 4 16GB models for an average price of \$205! More than double what Apple and Optus offered.

Doing your research and spending a little extra time selling your old phone rather than trading it in will pay off.

Can't trade your phone in?

If you have a really old or broken phone that doesn't have a trade-in value, you can recycle the device by sending it to MobileMuster. Find out more at mobilemuster.com.au

Picking a plan

When a new smartphone is released we're bombarded with dazzling images and relentless marketing campaigns. After that comes the array of offers from the telcos to get you over the line and signed up for a 24 month contract. It's often easy and convenient to sign up to a new contract with your current provider, but before you do, it's important to do your research and ensure you're getting the best deal that suits your needs.

Finding the right plan can be a bit of a lucky dip. ACCAN research from March 2014 found that only half of us actually use all of our included value.

The best way to find the right plan is to compare your existing usage with the plans on offer. Telcos are required to make current usage information available; usually you can find it by logging into your account on the telco's website. Failing that, there are a few rules of thumb - in 2013 the average mobile phone owner in Australia made about 230 minutes worth of calls and used about 500MB of data per month. But watch out - if you're an early adopter you're likely to use more than these averages.

If you're signing onto a 24 month contract remember your usage is likely to increase over time. Smartphone data usage is expected to grow 60 per cent each year for the next three years. So if you're using around 1GB a month today, you may find you use over 2.5GB by the time your contract is up.

Consumers on 4G also tend to use 50 per cent more data, so if you're upgrading to a 4G capable phone factor this in.

In the ACCAN office we like to think we're pretty savvy consumers, but when a shiny new device like the iPhone 6 comes out even we can get caught up in the magic of it and become putty in the telcos' hands. If you're going to give in to that 'new phone feeling' try to avoid long term contracts, find a plan that matches your usage now and gives you room to move.

If you can afford it, sometimes it pays to purchase a handset outright rather than signing up to a long contract. When you purchase an unlocked device you'll be avoiding early termination fees and you'll be free to shop around for the best deal that suits your needs without being locked down to the one provider for two years.

Mobile data sharing

Mobile data has become a battleground in the telco market. Many plans now offer 'unlimited' voice and SMS. The cheapest, offered by Boost Mobile, comes in at around \$40 a month. So the real differentiator is the amount of included data and what you can do with it.

Earlier this year we saw Telstra and Optus both start offering plans that allow consumers to share mobile data across multiple devices. We examined these mobile data sharing plans to determine if consumers actually need to sign up to share data across devices.

The short answer is no. The cheapest way to share data across devices is to activate a Wi-Fi hotspot on your phone which allows you to connect your laptop, tablet or other device to the internet using your phone as a modem.

While using your phone as a Wi-

Fi hotspot does chew through your battery, this way you'll avoid paying extra fees from your telco to share data across your devices.

These fees can range from a once off \$5 fee per device from Optus, to the heftier \$10 per month per device fee that Telstra charges. The plans from each telco allow you to connect up to five devices which in the Telstra case can become quite costly.

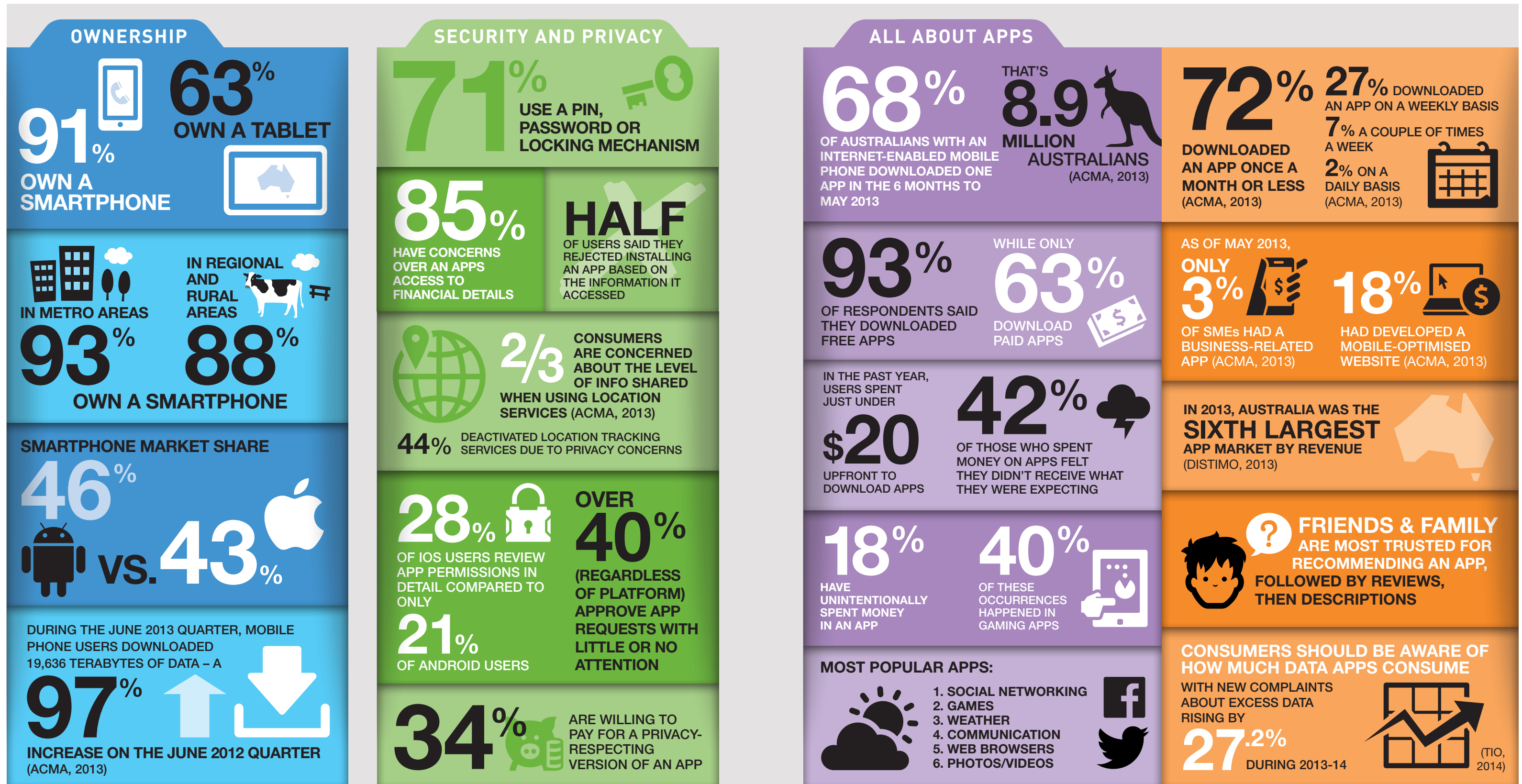
The more devices you sign up to a data sharing plan, the more data you're likely to consume. You should keep a close eye on your usage as some of the telcos offer auto-upgrades that will kick in once you reach your limit meaning you'll get charged extra on your monthly bill. These range in price starting at \$10.

While these flat charges are usually less costly than per megabyte charges, you still could be forking out more money than you expected to be paying. Check with your telco to find out the easiest way for you to monitor your usage to ensure you don't exceed your limit.

Before signing up to a new phone contract always:

- Know your average call and data usage
- Compare plans from a range of telcos using comparison websites like WhistleOut
- Ensure that the provider you're going with has coverage in your area
- Be aware of the early termination fees associated with signing up to a contract
- Read the critical information summary

Smartphones, tablets and apps



*Information from ACCAN research; ACMA's "Mobile apps: putting the smart in smartphones"; Distimo's "2013 Year in Review" & TIO 2013-2014 Annual Report.

Challenging negativity with **Positive Penguins**

We chat to Meg and Sara Price about their app, Positive Penguins, one of the winners of most accessible children's app in the inaugural Apps For All Challenge.

When Sara Price was in year 3 she created a PowerPoint presentation on the topic Healthy Mind, Healthy Body for a school project. Her mum, Meg, had previously taught her how to catch, challenge and change her negative thoughts so Sara decided to use these ideas and turn them into something fun.

To do this she added penguins to the equation and Positive Penguins was born. She created four penguin characters – Evi, Ollie, Happ and Buddy – who ask children about their feelings and thoughts and help them challenge the negative stories they tell themselves.

“Sara added penguins to the project because she had learnt they are the most resilient animals on Earth and also just because they are her favourite animal,” said Meg.

Sara was asked to present the project at an assembly in front of her school and soon teachers and parents were asking for copies of the PowerPoint.

Out of this came the idea to turn Positive Penguins into a smartphone app so it could reach more children and be available to anyone at any time.

Through the app children take a journey with each of the four penguins playing a different role. Evi looks for evidence about the child's thoughts. Ollie looks at the bigger picture of what else might be going on in the child's surroundings to cause the negativity.



Sara Price and her mum Meg developed the Positive Penguins app.



Happ asks what's the worst, best or most likely thing to happen.

Finally, Buddy is like a best friend who asks what you would tell a friend about the situation.

“The best thing about the app is the way the penguins help you realise that your feelings come from the thoughts or stories you tell yourself and not everything you tell yourself is true,” said Sara.

“The app teaches children a resilience strategy which is so important in today's world,” added Meg. “It gives them an opportunity to learn to catch the feelings they have, understand why they are feeling that way and challenge the stories they tell themselves so they can be more

optimistic or realistic about the event.”

Sara and Meg have received positive feedback about the app from parents, teachers and children from all over the world.

“We love it when kids email us and say thank you because they learnt they have the power to choose how they see things and how they are feeling,” said Sara.

With Positive Penguins winning awards and praise, Meg and Sara plan to keep improving the app to add more features. With the help of another student, Sara has also developed two other apps which aim to help families foster positive conversations.

Positive Penguins is available on iOS and Android. Visit positivepenguins.com to learn more.

How to use less mobile data on your smartphone

From the latest Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) Annual Report we learnt that excess data charges for mobile phones continue to be an issue for consumers. Complaints in this area have increased by 27.2 per cent in the last year.

To combat issues with mobile data usage, some of the telcos now offer a flat fee for 1GB of extra data and will automatically up your allowance once you reach your limit. While this is cheaper than per megabyte charges, it may still be problematic if you're unaware of how to check your usage and then find extra charges on your next bill.

With the abundance of apps and combination of smartphones and tablets being used at 4G speeds, you can chew through your data allowance faster than ever. Here are our top tips on how to use less data on your smartphone and avoid bill shock.

1 Turn off push notifications

Notifications from apps, emails, social media and maps can use up mobile data. Usually, you can turn these off by going into the settings on your phone and changing your preferences for

each app. You may also want to disable automatic updates for apps that can use up a lot of data.

2 Change your Wi-Fi settings

If you're using an Android or iOS device you can change the settings on your phone so some services run only when you are connected to Wi-Fi.

3 Beware of messaging services that use up data

Data based text services such as WhatsApp or Viber can burn through your mobile data, so try not to use them unless you're connected to Wi-Fi. If you're using iOS, turning off iMessage can also help as it also uses data to send messages. This is important to know, especially if your plan includes unlimited text messages.

4 Beware of “free” apps

Our recent app research found that free apps are popular; however they can

often use up more data than paid apps as they generally have more ads.

5 Manually close certain apps

When you stop using an app it may still be running in the background and using up your mobile data if it isn't closed properly. Make sure that apps like GPS (maps), video or audio streaming (YouTube, Rdio, Spotify) or VoIP (Skype) are not actively running in the background after you've finished using them.

6 Monitor and track your data usage

See if your provider has an app you can download to monitor your usage or login to your online account with your provider. If you're using an Android phone you can check your usage in the Wireless and Networks section of the settings and set a mobile data limit so you don't exceed your monthly allowance.

Too soon to change the **TCP Code**



The Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code is a bulwark built by industry, consumer representatives and regulators to ensure appropriate consumer safeguards. Brought in two years ago, some of its provisions only took effect in September 2014. It was designed to address ballooning consumer dissatisfaction with the telco industry, so the proposed removal of some of its most important components so soon after its introduction is surprising.

Despite some major reservations, ACCAN feels many of the changes are appropriate and will streamline obligations and aid compliance. In one instance, the reform process could go even further to remove an unused area of the Code.

There are two important measures of the TCP Code's success - improved customer satisfaction and reduced TIO complaints. Communications Alliance's customer satisfaction survey shows the percentage of dissatisfied and very dissatisfied customers fell from 19 per cent in mid-2013 (when the survey began) to 14 per cent in September 2014. Meanwhile TIO complaints have dropped by 28 per cent since 2012 to the lowest point in six years.

Given these improvements, there needs to be some justification for change. An opportunist approach to deregulation, unguided by evidence, will lead us back to the dark days of consumer mistrust.

A major component of the proposed repeal is the removal of clauses aimed at poor advertising and sales practices. The justification for controlling the use of terms such as 'cap', 'unlimited' and 'free' is to remove duplication with the Australian Consumer Law (ACL). Many of these Code obligations were created over and above the ACL to give guidance or address particular deficits in telco practice. The ACL and its previous incarnations existed prior to the Code and despite this, there was still a time of record high complaints.

The ACMA's 'Reconnecting the Customer Final Report' (RTC) gave a clear indication that a key driver of complaints was the lack of quality information available to consumers in the pre-sale marketing and advertising and pre-contract phases of the customer lifecycle. The ACMA's number one proposal was to introduce enforceable rules that applied to advertising practices. As the Report identified, complaints manifest when "consumers have incorrect (but not unreasonable)

expectations about key features of their products". The Code has been instrumental in managing the disconnect between expectation and reality.

For industry, the Code provisions are designed to be specific and easy to comprehend. They outline obligations which would otherwise require an understanding of several pieces of legislation and a plethora of case law. This can be a costly exercise; disproportionately so for smaller suppliers. Removing enforceability or the ACMA's role in guiding compliance will not just risk adverse outcomes for consumers, but is likely to dramatically increase compliance costs.

This approach isn't just appropriate from a consumer safeguard perspective; it actually encourages properly functioning markets because informed consumers make markets work. As markets and technology evolve, they become infinitely more complex. This information asymmetry leads to poor purchasing decisions which in turn damage the allocative efficiency of a market.

The great leap forward for the TCP Code in 2012 was its recognition of this potential for consumer confusion and the subsequent attempt to curb sales practices that exploit consumers. The ACMA's careful graduated response approach using the current Code places an emphasis on guiding and educating industry towards positive outcomes. Whilst at the time many argued for a stronger set of regulations with more powers for the ACMA. Without doubt the lighter touch co-regulatory industry Code has been instrumental in better outcomes for consumers. With a demonstrable decrease in complaints it is an approach which is beginning to create lasting change in the industry. The nearly 139,000 complaints in the past year shows the timing of proposed changes is premature as we are still busy consolidating the most important shift in telco industry practices in over a decade.

Standards in English to Auslan online translations

Imagine being in a foreign country where you can't speak or understand the language. You have little or no access to online information that is vital to you. Some translations may exist, but these are unreliable and do not adhere to any standards or guidelines making them difficult to interpret and understand.

This is the situation that Auslan (Australian sign language) users find themselves in. Auslan is the preferred language of many Deaf Australians. While many Auslan users may be bilingual, they may find reading English challenging.

With government, universities and other organisations increasingly moving towards digital forms of communication, there is increasing urgency for this material to be accessible to Auslan users through filmed translations. Unfortunately if the quality of a translation is poor, then the material will not be understood and won't reach people who may not have access otherwise. Costly videos and web development are then also wasted.

Unlike most spoken languages, however, a major issue for the Auslan translation industry is the lack of official translation standards or guidelines. This means that translators have no guidance when composing their material. As a result the quality of translations on the web varies widely.

A recent ground-breaking study by DeafEd at the North Melbourne Institute of TAFE, in conjunction with

Macquarie University, aims to overcome these issues and for the first time, create an evidence-based English to Auslan translation production rubric for creating online texts. The project was funded by the ACCAN Grants Scheme with additional funding support from the Australian Communication Exchange (ACE), the Deaf Society of New South Wales (DSNSW), Deaf Services Queensland (DSQ), Vicdeaf and the Western Australian Deaf Society (WADS).

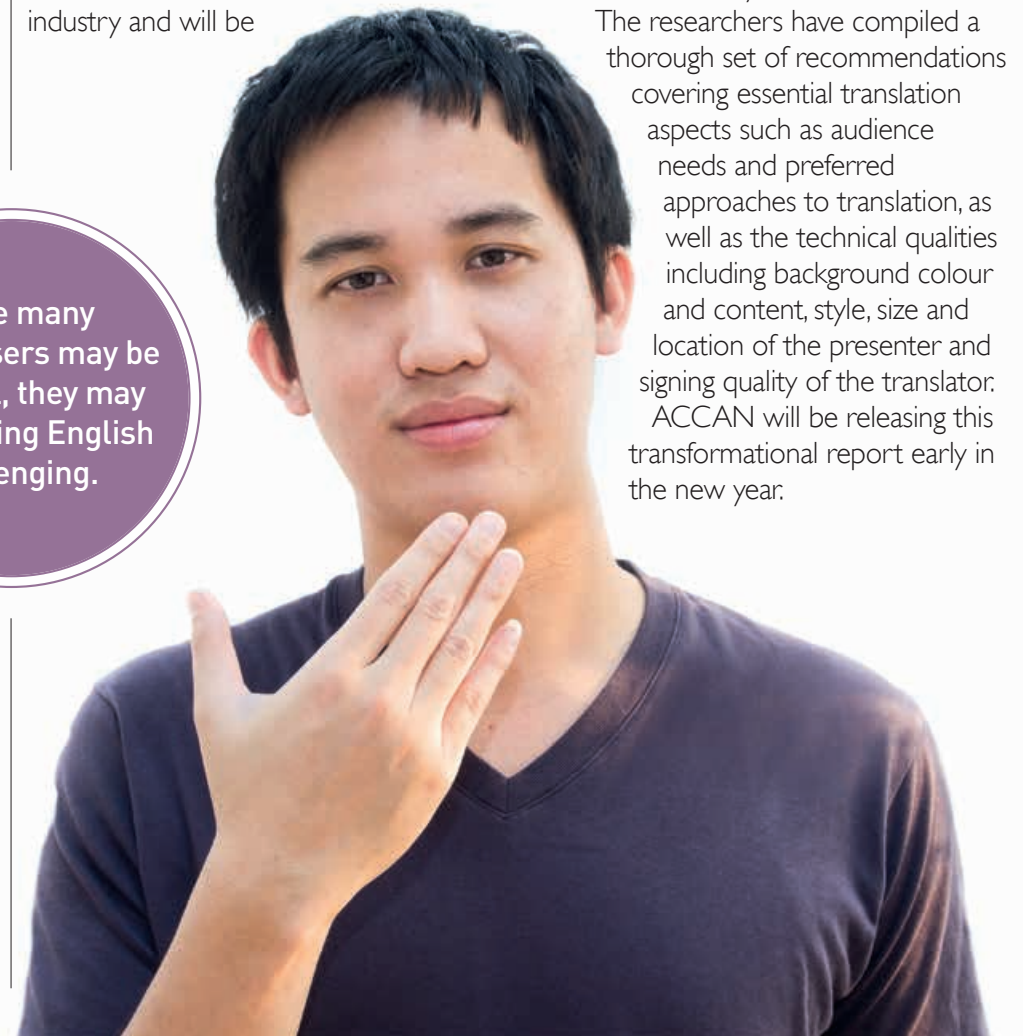
This is an exciting development for the Auslan translation industry and will be

an important step to ensure that vital information from government services and other organisations is accessible and should improve overall quality for Auslan users.

The study audited the quality of existing translations and identified common characteristics. The researchers then collected the responses of Deaf consumers and experienced translation practitioners across Australia. Participants were shown sample English to Auslan translation texts with qualitative data from each session being collected and analysed.

The researchers have compiled a thorough set of recommendations covering essential translation aspects such as audience needs and preferred approaches to translation, as well as the technical qualities including background colour and content, style, size and location of the presenter and signing quality of the translator. ACCAN will be releasing this transformational report early in the new year.

While many Auslan users may be bilingual, they may find reading English challenging.



Community Broadcasting Association of Australia



The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) represents community broadcasting across the nation by helping radio and television stations build capability and by creating an environment in which the community broadcasting sector can thrive.



CBAA General Manager, Jon Bisset

The CBAA has more than 270 member stations that broadcast across Australia and provide a voice for communities that aren't well represented in broadcasting. Based in Sydney and Melbourne, the CBAA was formed by a small group of enthusiastic radio makers in 1974 and since then has increased in size every year.

"Community broadcasting is a key pillar of the Australian media landscape," says CBAA General Manager, Jon Bisset. "It plays an important role in providing a voice for communities that aren't adequately serviced by other broadcasting sectors, including Indigenous and ethnic communities, religious communities, youth, seniors and Australian music and arts communities."

"Ultimately it contributes to an Australia that is an open society, a strong democracy and has a vibrant culture, providing a diverse range of viewpoints, promoting the identities of communities, providing opportunities for participation in free to air media and contributing to media diversity."

Under Jon's leadership, the CBAA now has 20 staff and its members include nearly 80 per cent of Australia's permanently licenced community radio stations. This is an important network for the community broadcasting sector, allowing resources to be shared across Australia.

"Community broadcasting is largely volunteer driven, with 22,000 people giving their time to their local station. The strong networks that exist around the country allow these volunteers to connect with each other, to share programs and resources and to support each other in generating high levels of local content and providing a

unique range of services and programs for their communities."

Australia's community broadcasting sector is recognised internationally as a successful example of grassroots media. Indeed, community broadcasting is the country's largest independent media sector. The national radio audience reach is 5 million listeners per week.

A great service offered by the CBAA is the Australian Music Radio Airplay Project (Amrap) that distributes and promotes contemporary music to community radio stations nationwide. Amrap offers services to signed and unsigned Australian artists, record labels, music business enterprises and all Australian community radio stations and program makers.

"For many musicians Amrap's Airtt provides an effective way to grow an audience beyond their local scene and to encourage other stations to pick them up," says Jon. "Other musicians use their airplay results to go international, like Brisbane's The Trouble with Templeton who recently used their Amrap chart results to support their US tour visa application."

With over 2,500 broadcasters from 250 community radio stations subscribing to Airtt, it really is an effective way for unsigned artists to get their music out there.

"The Airtt initiative distributes music



Community radio stations in Australia provide a voice for communities that aren't serviced by other broadcasting services such as:

- Indigenous Australians
- Ethnic communities
- Youth and seniors communities
- Educational services
- Reading services for print disabled communities
- Music, arts and cultural services
- Religious communities

from over 500 new unsigned musicians to community radio every year and the success stories are as unique and exciting as the music. As award-winning independent artist John Butler put it, "without community radio, 99 per cent of Australia's artists will not receive any airplay and will lose the ability to connect with their audience and Amrap provides an essential tool for these musicians to access radio play."

While they provide news, local content and entertainment, there are also times

when community broadcast stations can deliver vital services to their communities.

One example is Radio Dungog, the only radio station based in Dungog Shire in NSW. During severe weather events in early 2013, the radio station joined forces with the State Emergency Service to provide relevant information about road closures and flooding to local residents.

Following these events, the station is looking to move its transmission facilities and upgrade equipment so it can reach the

whole of Dungog Shire and help out in future emergencies.

When it comes to the future of community broadcasting, Jon says that it's still fundamentally about radio and digital radio in particular.

"The recently released 2014 Digital Radio Report found a year-on-year increase of 76 per cent in the number of people listening to digital radio each week in capital cities.

“
The Airtt initiative distributes music from over 500 new unsigned musicians to community radio every year
”

We see this continuing, with digital radio doing the heavy lifting as a delivery platform, with online streaming sitting alongside it in a complementary way."

"Community broadcasters will continue to serve as Australia's largest independent media sector, creating accessible, trusted and diverse programming, supporting fair and meaningful access to media and local content."