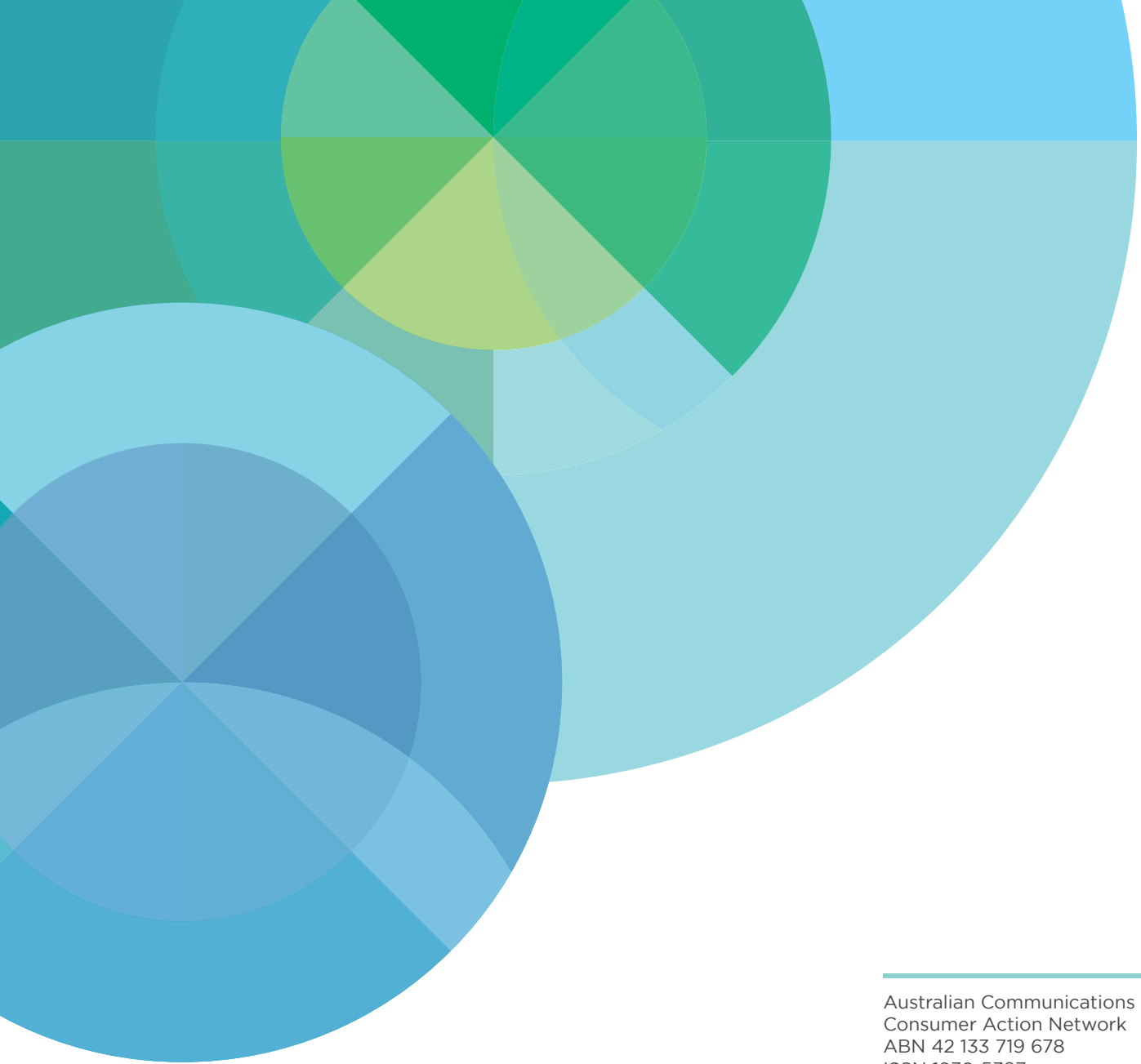




OUR IMPACT THIS YEAR

2018-2019 ANNUAL REPORT





Australian Communications
Consumer Action Network
ABN 42 133 719 678
ISSN 1838-5397

For the year ended 30 June 2019

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WHO WE ARE



OUR ORGANISATION

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation representing individuals, small businesses and not-for-profit groups as consumers of communications products and services. ACCAN focuses on goods and services encompassed by the converged areas of telecommunications, broadcasting, the internet and online services, including both current and emerging technologies.

The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.t

OUR MISSION

ACCAN's mission is to:

- Represent consumers and the public interest, with particular attention to the needs of consumers for whom the market is not working.
- Inspire, inform, enable and equip consumers to act in their own interests.
- Research emerging consumer communications issues to provide evidence-based policy advice.

OUR VALUES

As an organisation we will:

- Act with courage
- Operate openly
- Be inclusive
- Build relationships
- Value people

CHAIR REPORT



Deirdre O'Donnell
Chairperson
ACCAN Board

On behalf of ACCAN's Board, I am pleased to report on ACCAN's work over the past 12 months. I believe this year's annual report demonstrates the significant contribution that ACCAN makes to improving telecommunications services in Australia. We are all experiencing an enormous change to our lives with many connected devices and services now available. I have no doubt that ACCAN's work in ensuring that no one gets left behind throughout this huge transformation is of great value to all Australians.

ACCAN's achievements are many, but best demonstrated by the outcomes for consumers outlined in the pages ahead. The Government's implementation of new Industry Standards and its Consumer Safeguards Review were important initiatives this year that kept the focus on consumer concerns. Our contribution to these and other policy debates was extensive through submissions and position statements.

Another area of much activity has been regional communications with the conclusion of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee. While there is still much to be done, there were wins in the Government's response to this Committee's report. We are very grateful to all the members of the Rural Regional and Remote Communications Coalition with

whom we are working to ensure the voices of non-metropolitan consumers are heard.

This was the first year of the Accessible Telecoms Project funded by the NDIA. On behalf of ACCAN, I would like to thank IDEAS and Hearing Connections, both contracted to assist with this highly innovative project. The new service has been well received and is already making a difference to the lives of those using it.

I also want to acknowledge ACCAN's work on affordable broadband and its No Australian Left Offline policy position, launched in February. This has helped focus discussion on how the nation can reap the full economic and social benefits of our investment in the National Broadband Network by ensuring everyone can afford NBN. On behalf of the Board, thank you to all the organisations that have given their support for this vital initiative.

ACCAN's Independent Grants Program and research activities continue to build on the evidence base needed for our representational work. Thank you

to all those involved in delivering these innovative projects.

Finally, I particularly want to thank ACCAN's members for their ongoing support and sage advice. Our members assist us in our work on a daily basis, and I know the team really value their input.

There was one change to the Board this year – Professor Julian Thomas became a director, replacing Ryan Sengara who stepped down after six years' service. Thanks to Ryan as well as to the current directors for so generously volunteering their time and assisting ACCAN with their invaluable expertise and commitment.

In summary, it has been a year of much change and growth for ACCAN. I would like to make special mention of the ACCAN team and our CEO Teresa Corbin, and to convey my thanks to everyone at ACCAN for the support they provide to me and our Board.

CEO OVERVIEW

Through our work representing communications consumers this year, we have focused public discussions on trusted, inclusive and available communications services for all Australians. We are particularly pleased that debates have honed in on affordability since the release of our policy position No Australian Left Offline. I have also been heartened by the report of the Regional Telecommunications Independent Review which is responsible for the extension of the Mobile Black Spot program and funding for Digital Tech Hubs soon to be available.

It has been an important year with many improvements to consumer protection. We have also seen the ACMA increase its compliance and auditing activities.

Once again, ACCAN ensured that the consumer voice has been heard completing over 25 submissions, highlighting consumer concerns in many other areas and representing consumers on over 30 external committees. As markets become more globalised it is more important to have influence in international forums and so I have continued to Chair Standards Australia's Consumer Policy Committee (COPOLCO). We also attended meetings at the International Standards Organisations headquarters in Geneva and remotely participated in the Plenary meeting held in Zimbabwe. ACCAN also travelled to M-Enabling in Washington in order to keep up with the latest developments in accessibility and communications technology.



Teresa Corbin
Chief Executive
Officer

Our Grants Program changes were implemented and our ACCAN Research continued to put a spotlight on important issues for communications consumers. I want to especially thank the ACCAN Policy and the Grants and Research teams for this significant contribution to our evidence base for advocacy.

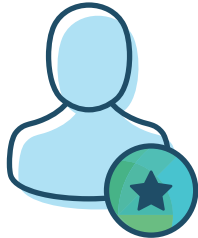
ACCAN membership remains at similar levels with a core of very active consumer organisations. ACCAN held four advisory forums and organised ad hoc consultations between various consumer sectors and industry stakeholders. Our outreach program continues to focus on supporting our members' events and understanding the communications issues relevant to their constituencies.

Our 2018 Conference – ACCAN-ect: Confidence in the Connected World– was attended by almost 200 delegates with 40 speakers and eight industry sponsors.

We raised consumer awareness with the publication of several blogs and tip sheets and achieved a record 1,447 media mentions across multiple news channels.

ACCAN's success depends on support from many key stakeholders. I want to thank industry and government representatives for their ongoing engagement with ACCAN. Thank you also to our many project partners, conference sponsors and Google for their continuing support of our internship program. I also extend my appreciation to our volunteers, members and Board directors. A very special thanks to the very committed ACCAN staff team who go above and beyond every day to get better outcomes for communications consumers.

YEAR IN REVIEW



ALMOST 110
ORGANISATIONAL +
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS



REPRESENT
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
CONSUMERS ON MORE THAN
30 COMMITTEES



PUBLISHED CONSUMER
EDUCATIONS ON NEARLY
A DOZEN TOPICS



4
ACCAN RESEARCH
PROJECTS



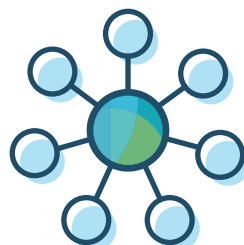
\$73,000
INVESTED INTO ACCAN
RESEARCH PROJECTS



26
SUBMISSIONS TO
GOVERNMENT AND
REGULATORY PROCESSES



1,447
MEDIA MENTIONS



398,684,246
POTENTIAL REACH
THROUGH MEDIA



28
MEDIA RELEASES

CONSUMER WINS



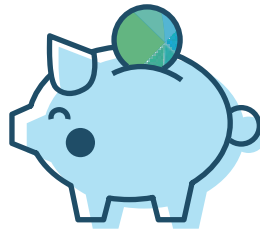
- ACCAN launched Accessible Telecoms – a national information and referral service on accessible features on telecommunications products and services
- No Australian Left Offline policy proposal supported by 15 not-for-profit organisations and acknowledged by industry
- Regional Telecommunications Review Report included two of ACCAN's recommendations – further infrastructure investment and the creation of an Indigenous digital inclusion strategy
- ACMA implemented the Industry Complaint Handling Standard and after six months only found seven telcos were compliant. 27 directions to comply were issued by the regulator
- ACCC's action against Optus in the Federal Court resulted in a \$10m fine for misleading customers about third party direct carrier billed services (conduct which was identified in our Third Party Charges research in 2017 and ACCAN's subsequent work raising this issue with the ACCC)
- Revised Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code included some improved consumer safeguards including credit assessments, expanded small business definition, more concrete financial hardship obligations, third party charges changes and tightened rules around sales practices
- New industry rules and standards were implemented to assist with the NBN migration improving the arrangements for installation and line speed checking of services
- The ACMA incorporated our comments on limiting charging for interim services in the Service Migration Determination
- Publication by the ACMA of customer service data from five telcos after issuing statutory notices compelling provision of the data, showing areas most in need of improvement (wait times; first contact resolution rates; call abandonment)
- NBN Co introduced support for consumers with non-monitored medical alarms in the NBN switchover
- ACCC declined to pass the NBN Special Access Undertaking Variation due to concerns about end user impacts
- ACCAN's policy positions reflected in the ACCC's work on the NBN Wholesale Service Standards Inquiry and the Department's Consumer Safeguards Review Part B (Reliability) consultation paper
- NBN Co's Sky Muster Plus product announced, offering unmetered data usage for email, text, and system updates
- Communications Alliance's Mobile Premium Services Working Committee responded to ACCAN's advocacy with some changes to their position
- ACMA formally warned three major telcos for failing to provide information about products and services that may suit the needs of consumers with a disability.

ACCAN: THE LAST 10 YEARS



7,735

MEDIA MENTIONS



**AWARDED
NEARLY \$2.65M**

IN GRANTS FUNDING,
PROCESSED **864** APPLICATIONS,
FUNDED **63** PROJECTS



HELD 60

CONSUMER CONSULTATIONS
AND ADVISOR MEETINGS



282

ORGANISATIONAL +
INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS



REPRESENTED
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
CONSUMERS ON MORE THAN
100 COMMITTEES



HOSTED OVER 50

EVENTS WITH MORE THAN
4500 PARTICIPANTS



43

RESEARCH
PUBLICATIONS



OVER 90

RESEARCH PROJECTS
COSTING **\$1.05M**



370

SUBMISSIONS TO GOVERNMENT,
INDUSTRY AND REGULATORY
PROCESSES



INNOVATE TOOLS

SUCH AS HARDSHIP PORTAL,
STAY CONNECTED INTERACTIVE
MAP, SMART PHONE APP,
(DOWNLOADED **12,000** TIMES)



**PARTICIPATED
IN OVER 50**

REVIEWS OF STANDARDS
AND INDUSTRY CODES
AND GUIDELINES



PUBLISHED OVER 50

BOOKLETS, TIP SHEETS
OR INFORMATION PAGES,
+30 EDITIONS OF OUR
QUARTERLY MAGAZINE

CONSUMER AWARENESS

ACCAN has continued to be a popular, credible source of information for the media about Australian communications consumers. During the 2018-19 financial year we achieved 1,447 media mentions – a 94% increase year-on-year.

We informed media about important consumer issues and developments, issuing 28 media releases covering topics like affordability of broadband, regional telecommunications, and the need for reliable telco services.

We responded to a range of enquiries from media about consumer issues including telco complaints, changes to the TCP Code, saving money on mobile phones and international roaming.

Our media comments appeared in high-profile outlets across print, online, TV, and radio. These outlets included the Australian Financial Review, the Sydney Morning Herald, Channel 7 News and multiple ABC radio stations.

ACCAN also continued to work as a member of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition to raise awareness of regional, rural and remote telecommunications issues through the media.

Throughout the year, we have kept consumers informed on the latest news, issues and advice with regular blogs, and updated consumer resources. We have also amplified this content through our social media and used these



Melyssa Troy
Media and
Communications Officer

platforms to engage in dialogue with consumers who pose telco questions.

During the year we posted 13 blogs on the ACCAN website. Posts about ACCAN's research on telco sales commissions and targets, changes to NBN pricing and what the Consumer Data Right may mean for consumers, were very popular with consumers. These consumer resources were produced during the year:

- New brochures on how to prepare your digital legacy and the Universal Service Obligation (USO)
- Tip sheet on how to avoid bill shock during the holiday season
- Four magazines that focused on confidence in the connected world (ACCANect conference 2018 theme), affordability issues in telco, No Australian Left Offline,

and broadband speed and performance.

ACCAN's website continues to be a popular hub for consumer information and resources. In total, our website attracted 151,116 page views this financial year. The most popular pages on our website were resources on ADSL availability, what to do if you get third party charges on your phone bill, and fraudulent mobile number porting and identity theft.

This year saw our social media presence continue to grow as we engage with consumers through these platforms. We now have more than 4,800 followers across Twitter and Facebook.

See our highlights on the next page for more information on our consumer reach and social media.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



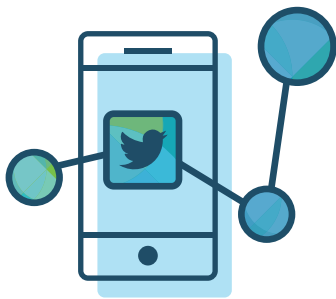
1,447

MEDIA MENTIONS



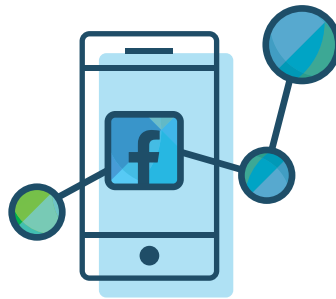
28

MEDIA RELEASES



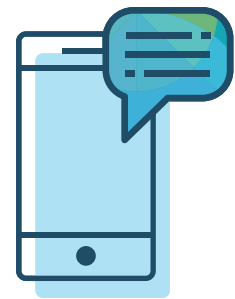
**MORE THAN
3,200**

TWITTER
FOLLOWERS



**MORE THAN
1,600**

FACEBOOK
FOLLOWERS



OUR SOCIAL MEDIA
POSTS HAVE BEEN
SEEN NEARLY

**350,000
TIMES**



151,116

WEBPAGE VIEWS



13

BLOG POSTS

ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

ACCAN met with members and consumer groups and attended relevant events on over 130 occasions in 2018-2019. Here are some highlights:

INDIGENOUS FOCUS DAY

ACCAN participated in the First Nations Media – Communications Indigenous Focus Day in Alice Springs in June 2019. This event enabled us to consult on Indigenous, remote and regional telecommunications issues and engage with the community.

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE

ACCAN presented at the Financial Counselling Australia national conference in Melbourne in May 2019. Over 600 delegates attended, representing financial counsellors, telecommunications and utilities companies, government, and others. The presentation focused on telecommunications issues including the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code and selling practices.

SACOSS ENERGY, WATER AND TELCO CONFERENCE

ACCAN joined the South Australian Council of Social Service conference in Adelaide during April

2019. The conference theme was “What Does it Mean to Put Consumers at the Heart?” We participated on a panel “Consumers and the Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code” alongside Communications Alliance. This allowed attendees to hear from both a consumer and industry perspective on the Code.

BLIND CITIZENS AUSTRALIA NATIONAL CONVENTION

ACCAN attended the Blind Citizens Australia Convention in Hobart during March 2019. Themes of the convention included the impact of emerging technology on the lives and independence of people who are blind or vision impaired and the future of audio description.

ASCCA CONFERENCE

In November 2018, ACCAN took part in the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association Conference in Sydney. Here, ACCAN was able to engage with older Australians on the telco issues that matter to them such as voice-only

services. ACCAN provided Top Tips consumer education materials as well as Accessible Telecoms materials for the delegate bags.

ACOSS CONFERENCE

ACCAN had a very successful exhibitor table at the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) Conference that was held in Sydney in October 2018. The theme of the Conference was ‘Rise to the Challenge’.

COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE

ACCAN attended the Country Women's Association of Australia Conference in Canberra in August 2018. We participated in a plenary session on Health and Telecommunications that provided attendees insights into the telco issues that were of most concern to our organisation. ACCAN also provided copies of Top Tips folders and promotional materials for the delegate bags.

EXTERNAL REPRESENTATION

1. ACCC Consumer Consultative Committee
2. ACCC/ AER Infrastructure Consultative Committee
3. ACCC Performance Consultative Committee
4. ACCC Wholesale Telecommunications Consultative Forum
5. ACMA Consumer Consultative Forum
6. ACMA Numbering Advisory Committee (under review)
7. Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance
8. Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency Electromagnetic Emissions Health Reference Group (under review)
9. Communications Alliance Information on Accessibility Features for Equipment Code Working Committee
10. Communications Alliance Mobile Premium Services Code Working Committee
11. Communications Alliance Handling of Life Threatening and Unwelcome Communications Code Working Committee (inactive)
12. Communications Alliance Telecommunications Consumer Protection Code Working Committee
13. Consumers Federation of Australia Executive Committee
14. Department of Communications and the Arts Stay Safe Online Week Steering Group (in active)
15. Department of Communications and the Arts Triple Zero Co-ordination Committee
16. Internet of Things Alliance of Australia Executive Council
17. International Telecommunications Users Group Board
18. NBN Product Development Forum
19. National Forum Emergency Warnings to the Community
20. National Relay Service National Advisory Committee (not currently meeting)
21. Office of the Australian Information Commissioner Consumer Privacy Network
22. Standards Australia Standards Development Advisory Council
23. Standards Australia JTC 1 Advisory Committee
24. Standards Australia IT 040 ICT Accessibility (inactive)
25. Standards Australia Chairpersons Advisory Group
26. Standards Australia COPOLCO Mirror Committee
27. Standards Australian QR 015 Complaint Handling (inactive)
28. Standards Australia Council
29. Standards Australia IT-020 Text Communications Equipment for use by People with Disabilities (inactive)
30. Standards Australia Nominating Organisations Forum
31. Telstra CEO and Consumer Roundtable
32. Telstra Digital Inclusion Index Advisory Committee

POLICY

ACCAN's policy team has worked hard to represent communications consumer interests in the 2018-19 year, and on delivering on our policy priorities.

Throughout the year we engaged with the industry, regulators, the Department of Communications and the Arts, and government to advocate for:

AFFORDABLE COMMUNICATIONS

Affordability has been a major focus of our work over the year as the cost of NBN broadband services have increased, putting them out of reach of households on limited incomes including those receiving income support.

ACCAN's compelling evidence base shows the need for a concessional NBN broadband service. Developed in consultation with the consumer sector, our agenda setting No Australian Left Offline policy proposal was released in February 2019. Support for our proposal continued to grow for the rest of the year in our meetings with government, industry and the consumer sector. It has been widely acknowledged as a solution to a significant affordability barrier that would support the underlying purpose and intention of the NBN.



IMPROVED CONSUMER SAFEGUARDS

Our work under this priority area has focused on seeking better consumer protections in the Telecommunications Consumer Protections Code through our participation on the industry working committee reviewing the Code. This intense process involved working closely with ACCAN member organisations and consumers to ensure that we were representing their interests, and culminated in the Australian Communications and Media Authority agreeing to register the Code in late June. While the Code has not delivered the level of consumer protections in some areas that we wished for, our work has resulted in some notable improvements – for example, tighter obligations for staff training and improving selling practices, new credit

Una Lawrence
Director of
Policy

assessment rules to help prevent financial over commitment, and an agreement that telcos need to resolve their customers third party billing complaints. The team has argued for improved consumer outcomes in many other forums over the year, including Communications Alliance's Mobile Premium Services Working Committee.

A major focus of the policy team was the Department of Communications and the Arts' long awaited consumer safeguards review, the first part focusing on Redress and Complaints in the context of soaring TIO complaint numbers, and the second on Reliability. We reiterated the need for consumers to have fast connections and fault repairs, minimal service outages, and compensation when service

delivery fails. We urged the ACCC to adopt a similar approach in relation to NBN service standards.

BETTER COMMUNICATIONS FOR POORLY SERVED AREAS

The 2018 Regional Telecommunications Review was an opportunity to highlight the urban/regional divide in quality and availability of services – both fixed voice, mobile and broadband. As a member of the Regional, Rural and Remote Communications Coalition we have worked hard to represent the interests of regional Australia in policy forums across the country, and achieved major wins with the announcement of a funded regional connectivity package by the Federal Government in March 2019. We engaged with NBN Co to support the development of improved Sky Muster satellite broadband better suited to the needs of consumers, and for the introduction of a better performing fixed wireless service.

EMPOWERING CONSUMER DECISION MAKING AND PRIVACY

As well as developing targeted information to help consumers navigate the complex telco market and supporting the ACCC's Measuring Broadband Australia program, we have participated in the public debate about the

Consumer Data Right (CDR). This is flagged as a future useful tool for telecommunications consumers choosing products best suited to their needs. The policy team has engaged with consultations by government on draft CDR legislation, and the ACCC's CDR Framework. Core to our approach is the need to provide privacy protections to consumers, prevent the exploitation of consumer data by commercial interests, to allow consumers to benefit from better market information without detriment.

IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY

A core focus of our accessibility priority has been our engagement with government and the deafness community to ensure that the National Relay Service meets current and future community needs, and that no diminution in access to services arises in transitioning to new providers.

ACCAN has continued to advocate for greater access to broadcast television for Australians with disability, as an active supporter of the blindness community's work for the introduction of audio description on Australian televi-

sion. This included participating in an Audio Description forum at Parliament House, Canberra to raise the profile of the issue, and developing an audio description business case for use by the community. Our work to support access for Deaf and hard of hearing consumers has seen us building an evidence base to support improvements in the standard of live television captioning on broadcast television.

Access to emergency services is an enduring concern, particularly as the last year saw several serious triple zero (000) outages. We have represented consumers on government and industry committees, participating in reviews of rules underpinning improved reliability, to ensure that the critical interests of consumers are a top priority in service delivery.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the promise to deliver huge benefits for people with disability, and for all consumers. It is an area we have started to engage with more closely in the past year, participating in several government and industry workshops and consultations to ensure that consumer interests are included in ongoing discussions and initiatives.

ACCESSIBLE TELECOMS

Accessible Telecoms is ACCAN's nation-wide disability telecommunications information and referral service. It is funded by a two year grant from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)'s Information, Linkages and Capacity Building scheme.

The initial six months of this year saw the scaling up of the Accessible Telecoms team. We recruited a project manager, a project officer and a part time project assistant.

On 3 December –International Day of People with Disabilities – ACCAN officially launched Accessible Telecoms to the public. Information was made available via freecall, SMS, web chat or online.

Since the launch of the service we have been continuing to expand the available resources, verifying and validating the information, and working with IDEAS on a second phase of the website.

ACCAN consulted with an expert advisory committee which convened this financial year. We have also received positive feedback from the NDIA regarding our progress reports.

The project is tracking its impact and community benefit with almost 3,500 unique visits to the website and more than 19,000 page views.



Our engagement with the telecommunications industry has been very positive with all major telecommunication providers linking to the service from their websites. Additionally, industry associations, Communications Alliance and the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association have promoted the service to their members.

Our engagement with both the Australian Communications and Media Authority and the Department of Communications and the Arts has also been helpful with both agencies promoting the service.

Andrew Stewart
Accessible Telecoms
Project Manager

Deehan Kokay
Accessible Telecoms
Project Assistant

Wayne Hawkins
Director of Inclusion

Andres Merlano
Accessible Telecoms
Project Officer

CONSULTATIONS



MEMBERS ADVISORY FORUM

The purpose of the Members' Advisory Forum (MAF) is to discuss the most important issues from the perspective of ACCAN's members and the people they represent.

A MAF meeting was held on 3 April 2019. Representatives from Isolated Children's Parents' Association, National Council of Women of Australia, The Country Women's Association of Australia, Hobart Legal Centre, The Benevolent Society, WEStjustice, Queensland Council of Social Service and Financial Counsellors Association of Western Australia attended the meeting.

DISABILITY ADVISORY FORUM

The purpose of the Disability Advisory Forum (DAF) is to discuss the most important telecommunications consumer issues from the perspective of key representatives in the disability sector.

The DAF meeting was postponed until 3 July 2019 with representatives invited from Deaf Australia, People with Disabilities Australia, National Ethnic Disability Alliance, Deafness Forum Australia, Brain Injury Australia, Vision Australia, Deaf Society NSW and Deafblind Australia.

INDIGENOUS ADVISORY FORUM

The purpose of the Indigenous Advisory Forum (IAF) is to discuss the most important telecommunications consumer issues from the perspective of key representatives in the Indigenous community.

An IAF meeting was held on 6 March 2019. Representatives from MoneyMob Talkabout, Financial Counselling Australia, Broome Circle, Anindilyakwa Land Council and National Rural Health Alliance attended the meeting.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVISORY FORUM

The purpose of the Small Business Advisory Forum (SBAF) is to discuss the most important telecommunications consumer issues from the perspective of key representatives in the small business environment.

A SBAF meeting was held on 8 May 2019. Representatives from, Council of Small Business of Australia, NSW Business Chamber, Office of the NSW Small Business Commissioner's Office and Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman's Office attended the meeting.

GRANTS

The financial year 2018-19 was a busy time behind the scenes as we continued to remodel the Grants Program. The effort was rewarded in the latest Round with increased engagement and success of applicants from the community sector, as well as an improved quality of applications overall. The new two-stage application process has been perceived as an improvement for applicants this year, with those invited to submit full applications having the chance to work closely with ACCAN's Grants Team to further hone and refine their planned projects.

The work of our Independent Grants Panel has been integral to this success, and our sincere thanks go to both Associate Professor Ellie Rennie and Mr Robin Eckermann AM who finished their terms on the Panel in 2019. We had the pleasure of welcoming Mr Len Bytheway, who brings significant community sector and telecommunications experience to the Panel's work. We commend all three Panellists for the professionalism and expertise they brought in assessing the many high-quality applications received and in providing input into the important improvements made to the Guidelines this year.

Our aim is that ACCAN is recognised as the primary and most credible source of information and research for and about Australian communications consumers. To this end, our Grants Program funds leading consumer-driven research and grassroots



consumer education initiatives. All resources produced under the Program are also available on our website - www.accan.org.au/grants

PROJECTS COMPLETED IN FY2018-19

AUDIO DESCRIPTION IN AUSTRALIA: AN ONLINE RESOURCE

Researchers from Curtin University created an online resource to raise the profile of audio description (AD) in Australia. AD is a vital accessibility feature for people with vision impairment but it is still unavailable on broadcast television in this country. Many Australians are unaware of how to access the limited services available if needed. Drawing on focus groups and modelled on international best practice, the report and fully accessible

Andrew Williams
Director of Operations


Catherine Wyburn
Grants Officer

Tanya Karliychuk
Grants and
Research Manager

online resource highlight where AD is available in the Australian marketplace and how consumers seek information about it. It also provides recommendations on the best ways to improve consumer access.

INTERNET AND ECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES IN RURAL AUSTRALIA - AN EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

Broadband for the Bush Alliance analysed national survey data focused on regional, rural and remote Australia. The work



investigated the availability, quality, reliability and affordability experiences of member organisations and their networks and looked at how consumers use their telecommunications services. A set of case studies was also produced, providing consumers' stories of their experiences of telecommunications in the bush.

THANKS A BUNDLE: MAKING E-COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DECISION-MAKING IMPAIRMENTS

The team at the Melbourne Social Equity Institute analysed the extent to which telecommunications providers' online information and sales materials comply with consumer protection law and disabil-

ity rights, and worked to increase awareness among providers of their legal obligations in this sphere. The project highlighted the corporate, social and economic benefits of improving access to online information. Thanks a Bundle also produced a practical toolkit and set of recommendations to help suppliers improve such access.

RESEARCH

The following research projects were commissioned by ACCAN. These projects contribute to the evidence base ACCAN draws on when identifying consumer issues and raising potential solutions with industry and government.

CAN YOU HEAR ME? RANKING THE CUSTOMER SERVICE OF AUSTRALIA'S PHONE AND INTERNET COMPANIES

Customer service in the telecommunications industry can be a frustrating experience for consumers who need to contact their provider quickly. To discover the aspects of customer service most in need of improvement, ACCAN surveyed 1,347 customers of 10 telecommunications providers. Respondents were unimpressed by the amount of time they spent trying to seek a resolution to their enquiry or issue, and the results also showed that consumers need to repeat the reason for their call multiple times, adding to the frustration and time taken to resolve their query. The findings of this research identified core factors in need



of improvement in the sector, with ACCAN recommending reduced timeframes to resolve issues, reduced wait times to contact customer service staff, increased first contact resolution, and improved training and performance of customer service staff.

SPOTLIGHT ON TELCO COMMISSIONS AND TARGETS: EXPLORING TELECOM-MUNICATIONS PROVIDERS' SALES INCENTIVE PRACTICES

This exploratory research was commissioned following a number of troubling stories ACCAN had received from consumers who

were sold plans or products that were more expensive than they had expected or that were beyond their means. Interviews with 30 former staff members from the three major telcos (Telstra, Optus and Vodafone) revealed financial incentive systems for front line sales staff built around sales targets, at times exposing consumers to questionable selling practices.

The report unveiled that some customer service representatives may be inadequately trained in the consumer protections available for telco customers. ACCAN has actively reached out to the telco industry regarding the findings of this report and the weaknesses it has exposed in the current consumer protections for consumers.



RENTAL CONNECT: ISSUES FACED BY RENTERS IN AUSTRALIA'S PHONE AND INTERNET MARKET

Lonergan Research was commissioned to help ACCAN better understand the lower proportion of fixed internet service uptake in rented households, and to identify any barriers to accessing the phone and internet services renters need. The study identified the circumstances leading to a successful or unsuccessful connection, shed light on the scale of the issue in Australia and discussed the level of support that might be needed for rental households to get connected.

PLEASE HOLD: COSTING TELCO CUSTOMER WAIT TIMES

Customer time – whether waiting to speak to an agent or waiting for a connection to be restored – does not have a price. This is because it is not traded in a market like the time spent working. However, we know that customer time has a value so we can estimate a cost. To find out what this might be for telco customers, we commissioned Synergies Economic Consultancy to look at what approaches had been taken in other sectors (transport, water, waste management) and assess their relevance. Synergies found the approach taken in transport can be used for valuing time taken to resolve telco issues. This report will inform our future advocacy for customer service and service reliability improvements and

enable us to demonstrate the significant cost to the community of current practices revealed in our Can You Hear Me? research.

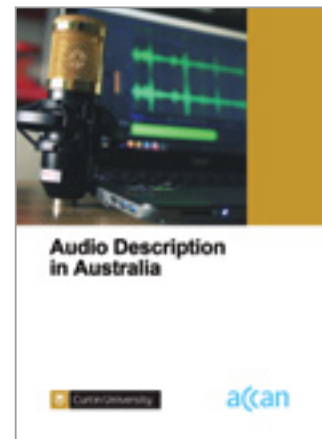
PUBLICATIONS



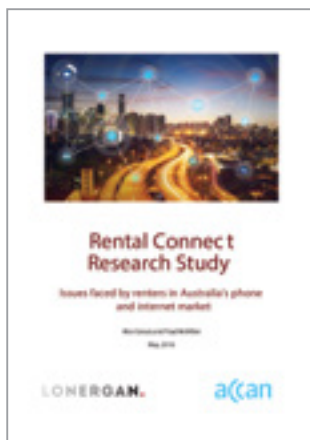
Ardalic, J., 2018, *Midas Touch: Consumer implications of the use of smartphone biometric data capturing capabilities*, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney



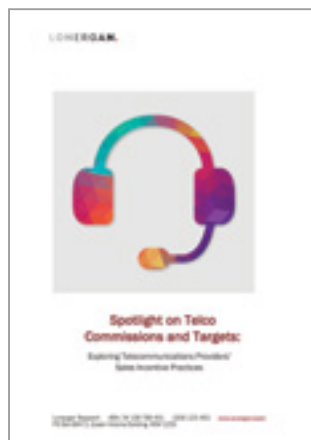
Colmar Brunton, 2018, *Can You Hear Me? Ranking the customer service of Australia's phone and internet companies*, Colmar Brunton, Sydney.



Ellis, K., Peaty, G., McRae, L., Kent, M. & Locke, K., 2019, *Audio Description in Australia*, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney



Goeury, A. & McMillan, F. 2018, *Rental Connect Research Study: Issues faced by renters in Australia's phone and internet market*, Lonergan, Sydney.



Lonergan Research 2019, *Spotlight on Telco Commissions and Targets: Exploring telecommunications providers' sales incentive practices*, Lonergan Research, Sydney



Maker, Y.; Paterson, J.; McSherry, B; Brophy, L; Arstein-Kerslake, A.; Callahan, A. and Teo, E., 2018, *Thanks a Bundle: Improving support and access to online telecommunications products for consumers with cognitive disabilities*, Australian Communications Consumer Action Network, Sydney and Melbourne Social Equity Institute, University of Melbourne.

MEMBER LISTING

As at 30 June. 2019

- 2508+Disconnected
- Able Australia
- AccessPlus WA Deaf, formerly WA Deaf Society Inc.
- Achieve Australia
- ACT Council of Social Service Inc.
- Adult Learning Australia
- Australian Communication Exchange
- Australian Council of Social Service
- Australian Federation of Deaf Societies
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations
- Australian Privacy Foundation
- Australian Regional Business Development Specialists
- Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association
- Better Hearing Australia
- Better Internet for Rural, Regional & Remote Australia
- Blind Citizens Australia
- Broadband for the Bush Alliance
- Broadband Alliance t/a Australian Smart Communities Association
- CARE Inc
- Central Land Council
- Centre for Appropriate Technology
- Centre for Inclusive Design
- CHOICE
- CICADA QLD
- CITIES - Centre for Indigenous Technology Information and Engineering Solutions
- City of Greater Geelong
- Collective of Self Help Groups
- Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of Victoria
- Combined Pensioners & Superannuants Association of NSW
- Communication Rights Australia
- Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
- Community Legal Centres NSW
- Consumer Action Law Centre
- Consumer Credit Legal Service WA
- Consumer Policy Research Centre
- Consumers' Association of South Australia
- Consumers' Federation of Australia
- Cotton Australia
- Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia
- Council on the Ageing Australia
- Council on the Ageing WA Inc.
- Country Women's Association of Australia
- Deaf Australia
- Deaf Children Australia
- Deaf NT
- Deaf Society of NSW
- Deafness Forum of Australia
- Desert Knowledge Australia
- Differently Abled People Association
- Digital Tasmania
- Electronic Frontiers Australia
- Expression Australia. Formally Tasmanian Deaf Society
- Ethnic Communities Council of WA
- Family Drug Support
- Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia
- Financial and Consumer Rights Council
- Financial Counselling Australia
- Financial Counsellors Association of Queensland
- Financial Counsellors Association of WA
- Financial Rights Legal Centre
- Health Consumers of Rural & Remote Australia
- Hitnet
- Homelessness Australia
- IDEAS NSW
- IEEE Society for the Social Implications of Technology (SSIT) - Australia Chapter
- Illawarra Legal Centre
- Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network
- Indigenous Remote Communications Association
- Infoxchange
- Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development
- Internet Australia
- Isolated Children's Parents' Association Australia
- Isolated Children's Parents' Association NT
- Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW
- Isolated Children's Parents' Association Queensland
- Isolated Children's Parents' Association WA
- itControl
- Kaay Holdings Pty Ltd
- Kingsford Legal Centre
- Leep NGO Inc.
- Macarthur Legal Centre
- National Association of Community Legal Centres
- National Association of Tenant Organisations
- National Children's and Youth Law Centre
- National Council of Women of Australia
- National Ethnic Disability Alliance
- National Farmers' Federation
- Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre
- NSW Council of Social Service
- NSW Farmers
- People with Disabilities WA
- People with Disability Australia
- Physical Disability Australia
- Physical Disability Council of NSW
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- Queensland Consumers Association
- Queensland Council of Social Service
- Redfern Legal Centre
- South Australian Financial Counsellors Association
- Tasmanians with Disabilities Inc.
- Tenants Queensland Inc.
- Think+DO Tank Foundation
- Uniting Care Wesley Bowden
- Vision Australia
- W.O.W! - Willing Older Workers Incorporated
- Wamboin Communications Action Group
- Western Australian Deaf Society
- Westjustice
- Westwood Spice
- Women with Disabilities Australia
- Women's Legal Services Australia
- Women's Legal Services NSW
- Youth Affairs Network of Queensland

SUBMISSIONS

ACCAN engaged with a number of consultations held by industry, government, regulatory and other bodies in 2018-19. Most of our submissions can be found online at: www.accan.org.au/submissions.

JULY 2018

- Department of Communications and the Arts, Copyright Modernisation Consultation

AUGUST 2018

- Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee, Regional Telecommunications Review 2018
- Communications Alliance, Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code
- Department of Communications and the Arts, Consumer Safeguards Review - Part A: Redress and Complaints Handling

SEPTEMBER 2018

- Australian Federal Government Treasury, Treasury Amendment (Consumer Data Right) Bill 2018 Consultation
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), review of Telecommunications (International Mobile Roaming) Industry Standard 2013 (IMR Standard)



OCTOBER 2018

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), Mobile Terminating Access Service (MTAS) declaration inquiry
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), Facilities Access Code consultation
- Australian Human Rights Commission, Human Rights and Technology consultation
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), investigation of TPG Telecom Limited's (TPG) proposed merger with Vodafone Hutchison Australia Pty Limited (VHA)
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), fixed line services declaration inquiry

Meredith Lea
Disability Policy Officer

Una Lawrence
Director of Policy

Gareth Downing
Senior Policy Analyst

Rebekah Sarkoezy
Policy Officer

Tara Stockwell
Senior Policy Advisor

Wayne Hawkins
Director of Inclusion

- Australian Federal Government Treasury, Treasury Amendment (Consumer Data Right) Bill 2018 further provisions consultation
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), Consumer Data Right Rules Framework Consultation
- Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS), Telecommunications and Other Legislation

Amendment (Assistance and Access) Bill 2018

- Australian Parliamentary Senate, inquiry into Australian content on broadcast, radio and streaming services

NOVEMBER 2018

- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), Review of the Emergency Call Service (ECS) Determination

DECEMBER 2018

- Department of Communications and the Arts, Telstra Request for TA Exemption South Brisbane network

JANUARY 2019

- Department of Communications and the Arts, Consumer Safeguards Review - Part B: Reliability of Services

FEBRUARY 2019

- Australian Federal Government Treasury, Pre-Budget Submission 2019-20
- Department of Communications and the Arts, Consultation on the remaking of Telstra Carrier Licence Conditions

MARCH 2019

- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), Inquiry into NBN Wholesale Service Standards: Second Discussion Paper
- Communications Alliance, Review of the Calling Number Display Guideline
- Communications Alliance, NBN Access Transfer Code (C647:2017)

APRIL 2019

- N/A

MAY 2019

- Communications Alliance, Draft Mobile Premium Services Code

JUNE 2019

- Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, Artificial Intelligence: Australia's Ethics Framework Public Consultation
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), caption exemption draft order for Telstra Pay TV Pty Ltd
- Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), Caption Exemption Draft Orders for Telstra Pay TV ; Selectra ; Optus Vision Media; Foxtel Cable TV; Fetch TV.

ACCAN BOARD



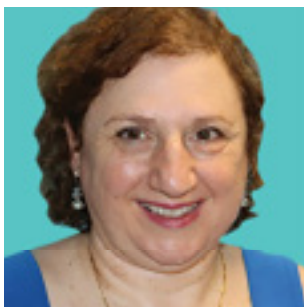
Dean Barton-Smith
Elected: 2016
Term ends: 2019



Chris Dodds
Elected: 2018
Term ends: 2021



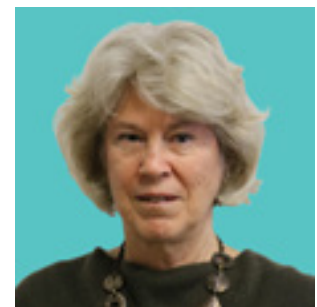
Heron Loban
Elected: 2018
Term ends: 2021



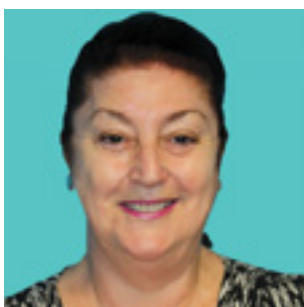
Nadia Moffat
Elected: 2016
Term ends: 2019



Deirdre O'Donnell
(Chairperson)
Elected: 2017
Term ends: 2020



Holly Raiche
Elected: 2017
Term ends: 2020



Victoria Rubensohn
Elected: 2017
Term ends: 2020



Julian Thomas
Elected: 2018
Term ends: 2021



Sarah Wilson
Elected: 2016
Term ends: 2019



accan

**Australian Communications
Consumer Action Network
Limited (ACCAN)**

ADDRESS PO Box 639,
Broadway NSW 2007

TEL (02) 9288 4000

FAX (02) 9288 4019

You can contact
ACCAN through the
National Relay Service -
www.relayservice.gov.au

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