SUMMIT PROGRAM

Digital Services Summit 2026

DATE	VENUE	TIME
Thursday 26 November 2026	East Hotel, Canberra	7:45 am – 3:00 pm

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

ACCAN acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and meet, and their ongoing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

About ACCAN

ACCAN is the peak national consumer organisation advocating for trusted, accessible, inclusive, affordable and available communications and digital services.

The operation of the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network 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.

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PUBLICATION DETAILS

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network Limited (ACCAN)

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Program

7:45 am Registration and refreshments

8:15 am

Acknowledgement of Country and Overview

Rosie Yeo, Facilitator

8:20 am

Welcome and scene-setting

Carol Bennett, CEO, ACCAN

8:35 am

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Gina Cass-Gottlieb

Chair, ACCC

8:50 am

PANEL

Digital services survey: what does it mean for consumers, and are we getting the innovation we need?

ACCAN's digital services survey found that digital services are fundamental to daily life for most people in Australia, but trust is uneven and many consumers lack confidence that their rights are protected. What are the reforms that consumers need and support from the digital services market?

Facilitated by **Rosie Yeo**

Carol Bennett
CEO, ACCAN

Peter Lewis
Social Researcher

Erin Turner
CEO, Consumer Policy Research Centre

9:30 am

PRESENTATION

Professor Jeannie Paterson

University of Melbourne Law School

9:45 am

PANEL

Contemporary consumer protections and the courts: do existing laws protect consumers at scale?

Unfair trading practices reforms are on the way, but general prohibitions enforced case by case through the courts can be slow to catch up with fast-moving digital markets. What can be learned from other sectors, and what role could sector-specific rules play in setting standards before harm occurs?

Facilitated by **Rosie Yeo**

Dr Ron Ben-David
Board Member, ACCAN

Dr Gareth Downing
Deputy CEO, ACCAN

Catriona Lowe
Deputy Chair, ACCC

Erin Turner
CEO, Consumer Policy Research Centre

10:40 am Morning tea

11:10 am

PANEL

AI, scams and dispute resolution: automated walls or efficient support for time-poor consumers?

AI is increasingly handling customer service and complaints. Where can AI become a barrier to resolution, who is accountable when it gets things wrong, and what would an effective digital ombud need to be able to do? And what happens when scammers use AI?

Facilitated by **Rosie Yeo**

Chloe Andrews
Director of Policy, ACCAN

Stef Roberts-Thomson
Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

Professor Jeannie Paterson
University of Melbourne Law School

11:55 am

FIRESIDE CHAT

Too much of a good thing – will competition in digital services improve consumer outcomes or provide even more opportunity to doomscroll?

What are some lessons that can be learned from other essential services like water and energy?

Facilitated by **Rosie Yeo**

CONVERSATION

Dr Ron Ben-David, Board Member, ACCAN

12:15 pm Lunch

1:15 pm

Welcome back

Delivered by **Rosie Yeo**

1:20 pm

PANEL

Consumer use of AI: risks, safety and opportunities

Australians are already using AI in their everyday lives. How do we maximise the opportunities while managing the risks – and what would genuine consumer representation in AI governance look like?

Facilitated by **Carol Bennett**, CEO, ACCAN

Samantha Yorke
Authority Member and Chief AI Officer, ACMA

Peter Lewis
Social Researcher

David Spriggs
CEO, Infoxchange

Tom Sulston
Head of Policy, Digital Rights Watch

2:00 pm

PRESENTATION

Digital Duty of Care: challenges and opportunities

Australia is advancing reforms to establish a digital duty of care. As reviewer of the *Online Safety Act 2021*, Delia will set out her views on potential challenges and opportunities for this critical reform.

Delia Rickard PSM
Former senior public servant and independent reviewer of the Online Safety Act 2021

2:15 pm

PANEL

Online safety: opportunities for improvement and contemporary challenges

Beyond age assurance, consumers face scams, harmful content and gendered online abuse. Where are the biggest remaining gaps, and what would make Australia's online safety framework work better?

Facilitated by **Rosie Yeo**

Sarah Davies
CEO, Alannah & Madeline Foundation

Delia Rickard PSM
Former senior public servant and independent reviewer of the Online Safety Act 2021

Dr Senuri Wijenayake
Senior Lecturer, RMIT University

Richard Fleming
General Counsel, eSafety Commissioner

2:45 pm

Wrap-up and closing remarks

Carol Bennett, CEO, ACCAN

3:00 pm **Close of summit**

Session times may change slightly on the day.

Speaker biographies

Gina Cass-Gottlieb

Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Gina Cass-Gottlieb commenced her 5-year appointment as Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) on 21 March 2022.

Prior to her appointment Gina had over 30 years' experience advising on a large number of merger, competition and regulatory matters in Australia and New Zealand.

Since 2013 Gina has been a member of the Reserve Bank of Australia's Payments System Board. Gina was a member of the Financial Regulator Assessment Authority from September 2021 to March 2022. Gina chairs Commission meetings and the Scams and Digital Markets Committee, is Deputy Chair of the Infrastructure and Communications Committee, and is a member of the Enforcement Committee, Mergers Review Committee, Digital ID and Consumer Data Right Committee, Fuel Monitoring Division of Commission, and Energy Markets Board.

Gina is the first female Chair of the ACCC and its predecessor the TPC, since its establishment in 1974. Gina is also a member of the Bureau of the OECD Competition Committee and the Bureau of the International Competition Network.

Sarah Davies AM

CEO, Alannah & Madeline Foundation

Sarah has held leadership and executive positions in the charity and for-purpose sector in Australia for the last 20 years, following a wide-ranging career in executive roles in tertiary education and private sector consulting in Australia and overseas.

In 2021 Sarah joined the Alannah & Madeline Foundation as the CEO. The Foundation works to make sure children can grow up safe, strong and heard – in both their online and offline worlds, free from violence, and with the support and strategies they need to thrive.

Sarah also serves on a range of Boards and committees. Her current governance roles include Chair of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) Advisory Board, non-executive director of the Sisterhood Foundation, and Board Member of the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD).

Peter Lewis

Social Researcher

Peter is non-executive Chair of Essential and a collaborative engagement platform for advocacy campaigns. For more than two decades he has worked with progressive organisations including unions, not-for-profits and responsible businesses to deliver social change. Peter is a regular columnist with the Guardian Australia, host of the Burning Platforms podcast, and the author of five books including Webtopia and The Public Square Project.

Catriona Lowe

Deputy Chair, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

Catriona Lowe was appointed by the Governor General to the position of ACCC Deputy Chair for a 5-year term on 27 January 2023. On 19 June 2023 Catriona commenced as an Associate Member of the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

For over 20 years Catriona has had a strong commitment to consumer issues and protection of consumer rights in her varied roles as a regulator, litigator and consumer advocate. Before joining the ACCC, Catriona was a Board Member of the Australian Energy Regulator from February 2020. She has also held a non-Executive director role on a range of boards, including the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, the Financial Adviser Standards and Ethics Authority and the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. Catriona was also principal of a consumer-focused consulting practice. From 2006 to 2013, Catriona was Co-CEO of the Consumer Action Law Centre. She has also held senior roles with the Consumers' Federation of Australia and the ACCC.

Catriona chairs the Compliance and Product Safety Committee, is the Deputy Chair of Commission, the Digital ID and Consumer Data Right Committee, Scams and Digital Markets Committee and Enforcement Committee, and is a member of the Energy Markets Board. Catriona has a Bachelor of Laws from Northern Territory University (now Charles Darwin University).

Stef Roberts-Thomson

Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman

Stef Roberts-Thomson (she/they) is Senior Policy and Advocacy Officer in the Emerging Communications team at the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO). She is part of a small team leading the TIO's campaign to establish an external dispute resolution scheme for digital platform users in Australia.

Stef authored the TIO's first Digital Platforms Complaints Insights report, examining more than 1,500 enquiries to highlight recurring problems consumers experience when they cannot resolve problems with a digital platform provider. She has supported consumers to speak publicly about their experiences, drawing attention to their stories across national media, stakeholders, and in Parliament House.

Stef holds a Master of Public Policy from RMIT University, and has previously worked in community organising, campaigning and philanthropy roles across purpose-led organisations in the not-for-profit sector.

Professor Jeannie Paterson

Professor of Law, University of Melbourne

Jeannie Marie Paterson is a Professor of Law and co-founding Director of the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Ethics in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology at the University of Melbourne (CAIDE). Jeannie's research and teaching focuses on the ethical and regulatory challenges of AI, along with the role of consumer protection law in promoting safe AI systems. Her current projects cover the regulation of AI chatbots and agents and AI in the civil justice system (focused on access to justice).

Delia Rickard PSM

Former senior public servant and independent reviewer of Online Safety Act 2021

Delia Rickard has spent her career as a regulator at both the ACCC and ASIC. Most recently she was the deputy chair of the ACCC for over a decade. In 2024 she undertook the review of the Online Safety Act for the government. Delia sits on numerous boards including AFCA, the Compensation Scheme of last Resort, IDCARE, the Consumer Policy Research Centre and also Chairs Ecstra, an organisation devoted to improving financial literacy. In 2011 she received the Public Service Medal & has also received the Inaugural Consumer Rights Award and the SOCAP Lifetime Achievement award.

David Spriggs

CEO, Infoxchange

David is passionate about creating a more digitally inclusive society and the role technology can play in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the not-for-profit sector. David is also Chair of the Australian Digital Inclusion Alliance and a Board member of Specialisterne Australia. He holds a Bachelor of Information Technology from the University of Queensland, a Certificate in Theology from the University of Melbourne and is a graduate of the Harvard Business School Executive Education Program and the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Tom Sulston

Head of Policy, Digital Rights Watch

Tom's 25-year career in software consultancy helped commercial and not-for-profit organisations develop and deploy software that is proven reliable, secure, and delightful. He is one of the co-founders of Digital Rights Watch, where he now serves as Head of Policy, bringing technical realism and social justice to digital policy aims. Tom is old enough to have enjoyed the early days of the Internet, before large corporations and governments started using it as a tool to commit human rights abuses at unimaginable scale. He'd like other people to share in the joy and wonder of our shared global humanity without being treated as data pigs to be slaughtered for the enrichment of the world's worst corporations. More hamster dance, fewer autonomous weapons.

Erin Turner

CEO, Consumer Policy Research Centre

Erin Turner is the CEO of the Consumer Policy Research Centre, a think tank that champions ideas to make markets fairer for Australians. She is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a board member of the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA) and Way Forward. Erin is the Chair of ARC Justice, the community legal centre in Central and Northern Victoria, which includes her hometown Shepparton on beautiful Yorta Yorta Country.

Dr Senuri Wijenayake

Senior Lecturer and ARC DECRA Fellow, RMIT University

Dr Senuri Wijenayake is a Senior Lecturer and ARC DECRA Fellow in the School of Computing Technologies at RMIT University. Her research explores what Safety by Design for social media could look like from the perspective of women, gender-diverse people and other underrepresented communities who are disproportionately targeted by online harm. She examines the strengths and limitations of current social media safety features, co-designs alternatives with affected users to bring their perspectives into the process, and identifies the design and policy changes needed to make these alternatives a reality.

As a 2024 ACCAN Independent Grants Program recipient, Dr Wijenayake led the project behind the national report Design and Policy Recommendations for Social Media Safety of Women and Gender-Diverse People in Australia. The report sets out practical recommendations for platforms and policymakers, and has attracted significant media attention amid ongoing discussions about Australia's proposed Digital Duty of Care. Through her DECRA project, "Protecting Australia from Online Abuse," she is extending this work across Australia and the UK in partnership with the Centre for Protecting Women Online at The Open University.

Dr Ron Ben-David

Professional Fellow (adjunct), Monash Business School

Dr Ron Ben-David is a Professorial Fellow with the Monash Business School. In this role, he writes and presents widely on energy market regulation, competition policy, and institutional design. He has been described as "one of Australia's leading energy thinkers."

Alongside his role at Monash University, Ron is a Deputy Chair of the Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission, and last year he was a member of the Independent Pricing Committee for NDIS pricing. Between 2008 and 2019, Ron served as the full-time chair of Victoria's Essential Services Commission. In this role, he was the architect of far-reaching reforms focussed on modernising institutional and regulatory settings in pursuit of ambitious consumer outcomes.

Previously, Ron held senior roles in the Departments of Premier and Cabinet, and Treasury and Finance in Victoria. He also headed the national secretariat for the Garnaut Climate Change Review from 2007.

Samantha Yorke

Authority Member and Chief AI Officer, ACMA

Sam is an accredited mediator, technology lawyer and policy advisor with over 25 years' experience working within the digital media and technology sectors both in Europe and the Asia Pacific. She is currently serving a five year statutory appointment as a Full-time Member of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) where she is the Authority lead on mis/disinformation, scams and other consumer and telco related matters.

In March 2026, Sam was appointed as the ACMA's inaugural Chief AI Officer, charged with leading the ACMA's approach to AI, building internal capability and ensuring the agency adopts technology safely and responsibly.

Prior to being appointed as an ACMA Authority Member, Sam worked in Google's Government Affairs and Public Policy team leading their privacy, online safety, scams and mis/disinformation efforts in Australia.

Richard Fleming

General Counsel, eSafety Commissioner

Richard leads the Office of the eSafety Commissioner's Legal Division, which supports the agency's regulatory activity across a wide range of legal and strategic issues, from coronial matters, administrative law matters, drafting and enforcing industry codes and standards, taking civil penalty proceedings, and law reform.

Prior to eSafety, Richard was at the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission leading investigation teams taking civil penalty proceedings in the Federal Court of Australia. Richard also led the National Anti Scam Centre, worked at Treasury on the review of competition laws, policies and institutions, and led the ACCC's Airline Monitoring role.

Host and facilitator biographies

Carol Bennett, BASc, MPP, MAICD

Chief Executive Officer, ACCAN

Carol is widely respected as a highly effective leader of major national organisations in Australia with a 20-year history as CEO of peak national bodies. During this time, she has driven organisational growth and achieved real outcomes through strategic partnerships with government, business and community groups. She is a change maker who has delivered reforms across health, aged care, gambling and currently communications policy. Carol has also extended her network internationally as a member of boards with a focus on working to improve outcomes for consumers.

Carol has developed an enviable national network in media, business, and government and outstanding expertise in strategic decision-making, communications, advocacy, stakeholder management, financial performance, collaboration building, government relations and corporate governance.

Dr Gareth Downing

Deputy Chief Executive Officer, ACCAN

Dr Gareth Downing is the Deputy CEO of ACCAN. Gareth oversees a team responsible for ACCAN's policy work, community engagement and membership. His career has focused on policy and regulation and he has worked on policy across a number of regulated sectors including telecommunications, energy and water. Gareth holds tertiary qualifications in policy, economics and law.

Chloe Andrews

Director of Policy, ACCAN

Chloe Andrews leads ACCAN's busy policy team, working across a range of issues affecting consumers. Her experience spans the Commonwealth Treasury, adviser roles in two Federal Government Ministers' offices, and time in government relations for a major telecommunications provider. Chloe holds a Bachelor of Laws and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Sydney.

Rosie Yeo, MBA, BA(Hons), GAICD, CSP

Director, Public Affairs Network Pty Ltd

Rosie Yeo is a strategist and expert facilitator who helps organisations make the most of bringing people together. With more than 25 years' experience across public sector, corporate and non-profit organisations in health, technology, finance, transport and infrastructure, Rosie combines sharp thinking, engaging facilitation and sound judgement to turn complex conversations into meaningful outcomes. The author of Go for Bold: How to Create Powerful Strategy in Uncertain Times, Rosie helps people navigate diverse perspectives, find common ground and turn insights into action.