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

**ACCAN Communications Consumer Congress**

**Wednesday, 13 September 2023**

Captioned by: Bernadette McGoldrick & Kasey Allen

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ANDREW WILLIAMS: Good morning, everybody. Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network's 2023 Consumer Congress. And for those that don't know me, my name is Andrew Williams, and I'm ACCAN's CEO. And on behalf of the entire ACCAN team, as well as our board, who are here today, thank you very much for joining us today and to talk about the fundamental needs for communications consumers in this country.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Eora People of the Gadigal Nation, and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging. This is Day 2 of our Congress and it's really great, it's the first time we have been in person, face-to-face, having real conversations since 2019. And looking out at the smoke, it's got shades of 2019 in Sydney at the moment as well, but hopefully that's more temporary than it was back then. And for those who were here yesterday, thank you very much for your contribution to our two workshops. I was really gratified by a lot of the feedback we received overnight. We had a great day, from the ACCAN team. We came away with a hell of a lot of insight and information that we will, as Gareth said yesterday, we will definitely put to good use. And I look forward to more great conversations today.

Today's format is a little bit more along the traditional conference format lines, and we've got a solid mix of keynote presentations and panel discussions that I hope you will find equally as insightful, informing and challenging, hopefully, as well.

But the primary aim of today is not just to hear from our speakers but, as I said, to stimulate some more of these robust conversations, and I have no doubt, if yesterday's a precedent, I have no doubt with more people in the room today that that will definitely be the case.

We'll also, at ACCAN, be entering into a new strategic planning

cycle. And what I'm hoping for is that a lot of the conversations and insight we've got from both yesterday and also coming up today will certainly help inform our work on that process as well. So, we have a new Strategic Plan that we're aiming to have implemented by the middle of next year, so we're just starting that process now. So, the timing for this is perfect.

For those who weren't here yesterday, you can find out the program on our website but also on the back of your card there's a QR code there and you'll find it there as well.

In the interests of time throughout the day, I won't be going through everybody's, all the speakers' bios, and I suspect that all the speakers are very happy about that, but you will be able to find them on our website and in the program as well.

But before we get into it, just some housekeeping. If you could turn your mobiles to silent, that would be great. For those who don't know, the bathrooms are out the door, turn right and keep walking - they're down the end of the hall. Emergency exits are well-signed. And for those who need assistance, there will be ACCAN staff on hand to help you in the unlikely event that that happens.

We're very privileged to have the Auslan interpreters and remote captioners here today, so if you are up on stage, please bear that in mind - speak slowly and clearly so that everybody can follow along.

It would be remiss of me to go further without acknowledging and thanking each of the sponsors that we have and are very privileged to work with. Without them, we wouldn't be in this room today. So, they are all acknowledged on the banners around the centre. They're on our website but I just want to pay specific focus on them now. Our major sponsors are Optus and Telstra. Our accessibility sponsor is auDA. Our delegate sponsors are NBN and TPG Telecom. Our associate sponsors are

the Australian Communications and Media Authority, Belong, the Centre for Inclusive Design and Google. Our morning tea sponsor, Communications Alliance. And our refreshment sponsor is the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. And for those who were here for refreshments last night, we thank you the TIO very much so. That was a great evening.

But we thank all of our sponsors and we really do value the relationship we have with both government, the industry, and the sector as a whole. Today is also a special day for another reason and I'll be a little bit indulgent from an ACCAN perspective here, but before we commence proceedings, I would like to pay special tribute to one of our long-standing staff members. Many of you may not know that our director of inclusion, Dr Wayne Hawkins, will be retiring in the middle of November. Wayne has been with us for over 13 years and, as this is most likely the last time that he will be venturing from the warm climes of Townsville to catch up with people here, I wanted to acknowledge that at the outset so that if people do want to catch up with Wayne, as we all have and we will in the future, and thank him for his outstanding contribution to not only ACCAN but also to the consumer sector in general, and the work he has done. (APPLAUSE) So, thank you very much, Wayne, and, yeah, I won't list all his achievements here because we've only got a day.