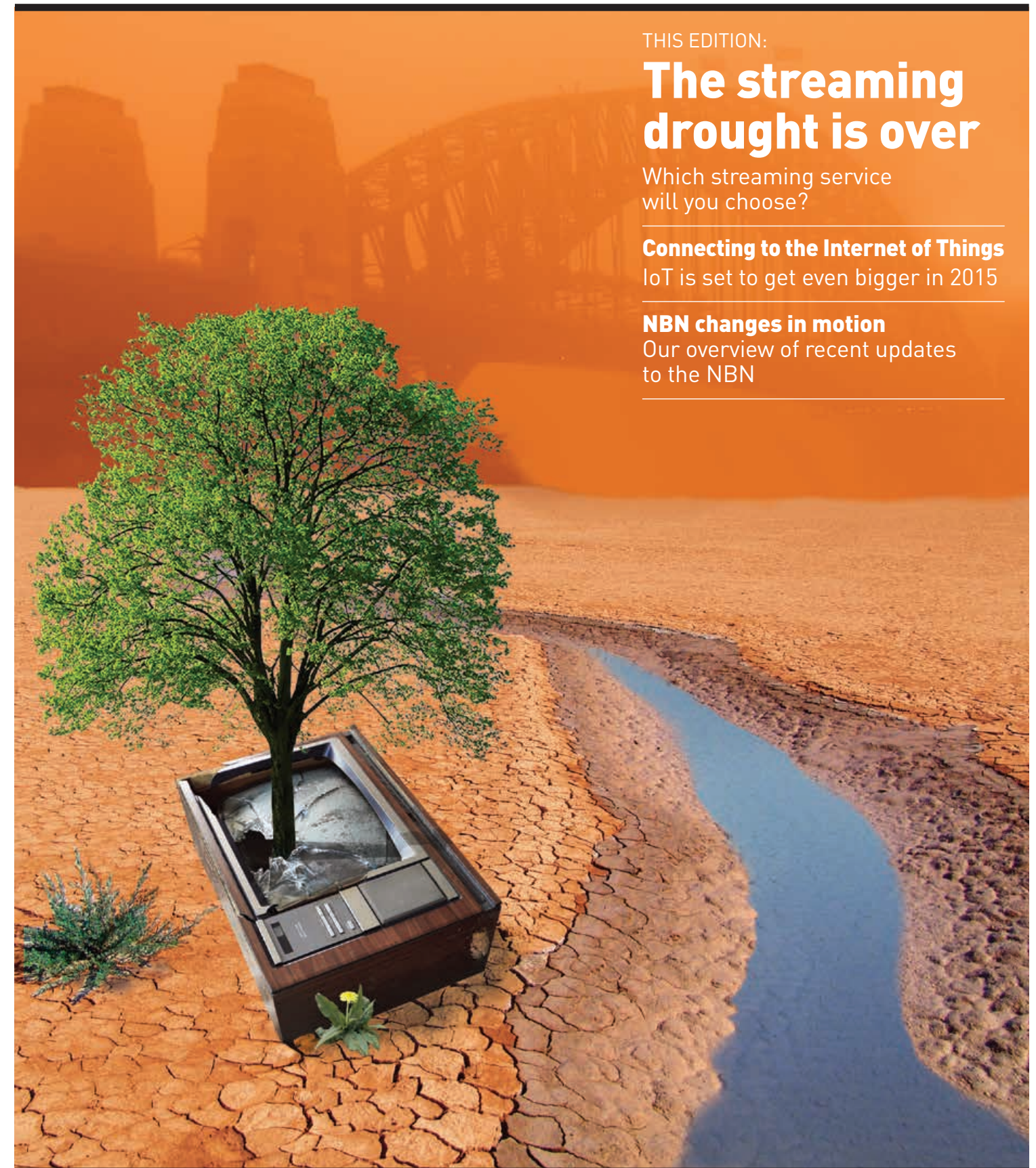




Australia's peak body for communications consumers



THIS EDITION:

The streaming drought is over

Which streaming service will you choose?

Connecting to the Internet of Things
IoT is set to get even bigger in 2015

NBN changes in motion
Our overview of recent updates to the NBN

PLUS: Tips for global roaming | Vision Australia's Document Accessibility Toolbar

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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We've launched our Facebook page! Go to facebook.com/accanau to keep up to date with ACCAN news.



Our CEO: Teresa Corbin

The Australian content streaming market is beginning to mature. Never have we had so many choices for online streaming and access to premium television and movie services. The launch of Netflix and Stan, combined with the presence of Presto and mainstay Quickflix gives consumers a range of options to choose from. But which one is for you? Our feature article explores your options for streaming the latest TV shows and movies.

The Spotlight section focuses on the emerging area of the Internet of Things (IoT). You might have heard the term being thrown around, but what does it actually mean? The truth is that IoT will have a great impact on our lives and change the way we perform many daily tasks as more and more items around us become connected to the internet. Find out more on **page 10**.

The News section features updates on our recent events and launches. This includes our Hardship Portal, an online resource designed to assist people through tough times and our Community Consultation Guide which aims to help communities

address issues with mobile coverage in their area. The section also covers our submission on the Federal Government's data retention bill, accessibility in government tenders and our involvement with the Communications Vision 2030 initiative.

In the last year we've seen a number of policy changes in regard to the National Broadband Network (NBN). One example is the policy to deliver broadband through a mix of technologies. These changes have seen the Government, NBN Co and Telstra updating their plans with the new policies taking effect. We've been following these developments and have an update on the NBN for you in our Policy section on **page 12**.

Other highlights in Issue 15 of the ACCAN Magazine include: tips on global roaming and an exciting grants project developed by Vision Australia.

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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Pencil in 1-2 September for our 2015 National Conference which will focus on affordability.



Our Community Consultation Guide can help with mobile black spots

ACCAN's *Community Consultation Guide* is designed to help communities address issues with mobile coverage in their areas.

The Guide sets out steps for communities to compile a business case to attract investment from governments and other organisations

for improved mobile coverage.

Mobile coverage is a key issue for consumers, particularly for those in regional, rural and remote Australia. Achieving improvements in mobile coverage is a priority focus of ACCAN's work.

"With poor mobile coverage a major

concern for consumers, ACCAN identified a need for a practical self-help toolkit to support communities in working to improve coverage in their areas," said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin.

In December the Federal Government released the guidelines for the Mobile Black Spots Programme which will deliver improvements for some Australians, but the demand for funding will far outstrip the supply.

"The Mobile Black Spots Programme is a positive step in addressing mobile coverage issues in regional, rural and remote Australia. The Guide will be useful to communities who want to put forward a business case to improve mobile coverage in their community, not just for the Programme, but also to telcos and other organisations," added Ms. Corbin.

The *Community Consultation Guide* is available for free on the ACCAN website.

ACCAN launches Hardship Portal

In December last year ACCAN launched its Hardship Portal – a set of resources designed to assist people through tough times.

The Portal is aimed at consumers experiencing hardship, but also has useful information for financial counsellors.

The Portal houses information on how to get help, including tips, contacts, the different options available and also the hardship policies of Telstra, Optus and Vodafone.

"Any of us might find ourselves in trouble. All it takes is illness, bad luck or even just a short stint out of work. The Hardship Portal is a helpful tool for consumers who are experiencing tough times and finding it hard to pay for their phone or internet bill," said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin.

"It's even useful for those who just want to save money as it is full of helpful tips to save money on your phone bill before things get out of hand."

While many might not think of themselves as being in hardship, it's important that consumers know there are policies and guidelines in place to help them when trouble hits.

Some consumers still paying for 1800 calls from mobiles

ACCAN has confirmed that only eight Australian telcos had honoured the industry commitment to make calls to 1800 numbers free from mobile phones.

The telcos that made these calls free by 1 January were Telstra, Optus, amaysim, Virgin, iiNet, Spintel, Jeenee Mobile and Boost Mobile.

In February, ACCAN expressed disappointment that a number of Australian telcos had failed to implement the changes to 1800 number calls from mobile phones.

Following our media release we were pleased to hear that Vaya, LiveConnected and Yatango implemented free calls to 1800 numbers from mobile phones.

It's important that these calls are free of charge from mobile phones as Australians move increasingly away from using fixed line phones in favour of mobiles and when many essential services use 1800 numbers as the primary contact for consumers.

Visit the Consumer Information section of the ACCAN website for a list of telcos that offer free calls to 1800 numbers from mobile phones.

Accessibility in Federal Government tenders

ACCAN was pleased to congratulate the Federal Government on its inclusion of 'accessibility' in the current Request For Tender (RFT) of ICT Hardware and other Services.

The acknowledgement of 'desirability' of products and services to meet international best practice standards of accessibility will help ensure that digital information and services provided by government agencies will be accessible to Australians with disability.

Along with many disability organisations, ACCAN has worked to promote the adoption of a whole-of-government policy for the procurement of accessible ICT.

Research indicates that when Governments mandate procurement of accessible ICT the benefits include greater economic and social participation and increased employment opportunities for people with disability. It also results in more accessible ICT products and services in the broader marketplace.

Wayne Hawkins, ACCAN Disability Policy Advisor, commented: "This is a great move by the Government in acknowledging the benefit accessible ICT provides for Australians with disability. It is particularly important as we move to a digital first economy that Australians with disability will be able to participate."

Communications Vision 2030

In November, ACCAN joined Macquarie Telecom, Hume Regional Development Australia and the Council of Small Business of Australia (COSBOA) in launching the Communications Vision 2030 project.

The project brings together representatives from business, regional communities and telcos with ACCAN representing the consumer perspective, to collaborate on developing a vision for Australia to lead in the digital age.

Following the launch in November, a policy seminar took place in late February in Canberra, with stakeholders and experts coming together to discuss a pathway to national digital economy leadership by 2030.

ACCAN's role in the project so far has been to highlight the consumer experience of communication services.

ACCAN's presentation at the event focused on the benefits of affordable and quality communications services for all.



Consumers shouldn't wear increase in costs for data retention

In January ACCAN presented a submission on the Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Bill 2014 to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCIS).

ACCAN Deputy CEO, Narelle Clark, and Grants and Research Officer,

Katerina Pavlidis, argued that costs for the proposed data retention scheme should not be passed on to consumers.

Our submission acknowledged that in many cases access to communications data by criminal-law enforcement agencies is legitimate and necessary, but stated that the scheme must have

robust and independent oversight mechanisms protecting the privacy of Australians.

The submission outlines 14 recommendations for any data retention scheme that is implemented and calls for costings of the scheme to be publicly available.

"We want costings for the scheme to be publicly available so that the full cost implications for consumers can be assessed. Costs incurred by telecommunications and internet service providers should be covered by Government. Although taxpayer funded, this would reduce the impact on lower income consumers who already struggle to pay their phone and internet bills," said ACCAN Deputy CEO, Narelle Clark.

Reporting to Parliament on access to metadata and the risk of unlawful access to the data are also covered in ACCAN's submission.

The streaming drought is over

Medical advice says you should re-feed slowly after starving in the desert. Over the last couple of years the Australian video streaming market has been locked away in a proverbial geo-blocked desert, while most of the world has feasted on a cornucopia of content. This year all that will change with the launch of Netflix and Stan as well as a repacked Presto and an evergreen Quickflix. ACCAN's Xavier O'Halloran, will ignore the medical advice and gorge himself on content to bring you a wrap-up of the video on demand (VoD) market.

STAN

Price: \$10/month
Data usage: Standard definition (SD) 1.13GB/hr; High definition (HD) 2.89GB/hr
 Odd name, decent service. Channel Nine and Fairfax Media combined to prepare this intriguing entrée. As with most of the streaming services it has a hefty back catalogue with a smattering of new and exclusive content. Standouts

include Golden Globe winning TV show *Transparent* and *Breaking Bad* spinoff *Better Call Saul* as well as a decent selection of Australian titles. Stan is even looking to commission some of its own content with a TV series spin off of *Wolf Creek* and a series based on the life of controversial Australian politician Lionel Murphy in the works. The content is available in high definition and will show the best quality your connection can handle. At this stage the content offering seems to be benefiting from a close relationship with US VoD supplier and main Netflix competitor, Amazon.

PRESTO

Price: TV \$9.99/month, movies \$9.99/month, TV & movie bundle \$14.99/month
Data usage: SD 1.31GB/hr, doesn't offer HD content
 Foxtel and Seven Network's potluck in the VoD market. Its best feature is the selection of recently aired Foxtel movies (usually cinema releases from over 6 months ago). Like the

others, it contains a back catalogue of older movies and TV shows. Your subscription gets you access to a little more HBO content, but don't expect anything released in the last couple of years or *Game of Thrones*. The lack of high definition means you might want to give this one a miss if you're watching on a big TV. At the time of testing Presto was having some serious problems when viewed through a Chromecast, but hopefully these were just early release bugs.

NETFLIX

Price: Netflix does things a little differently, there are three pricing tiers depending on the quality and number of simultaneous devices you want to watch on.
Basic: \$8.99 SD quality – 1 device (at least 0.5 Mbps to use)
Standard: \$11.99 HD quality – 2 devices at the same time (at least 5 Mbps per stream)
Premium: \$14.99 Ultra HD quality – 4 devices at the same time (at least 25 Mbps per stream).
Data usage: SD 0.7GB/hr, HD 3GB/hr, Ultra HD 7GB/hr

Netflix has the standard fare of older content but is beginning to develop a deep catalogue of its own productions, including the established hits *Orange is the New Black* and *House of Cards* as well as new releases *Marco Polo* and *Bloodline*. Before launch there was a lot of apprehension that the Australian version wouldn't be as good the US, with a few notable exceptions, this fear is largely unfounded with plenty of content to keep first timers couch bound. Netflix offers the highest picture quality, the most polished user interface and the picture quality adapts to your internet connection.



Access streaming services on your smart TV, computer or gaming console.



How to stream?

With all of these streaming options available it can be a bit overwhelming figuring out how to access them. Sure, they are easy to view on a laptop or desktop but if you're like me, you want to shimmy into that well-worn couch groove and watch them on your TV. So here are your options:

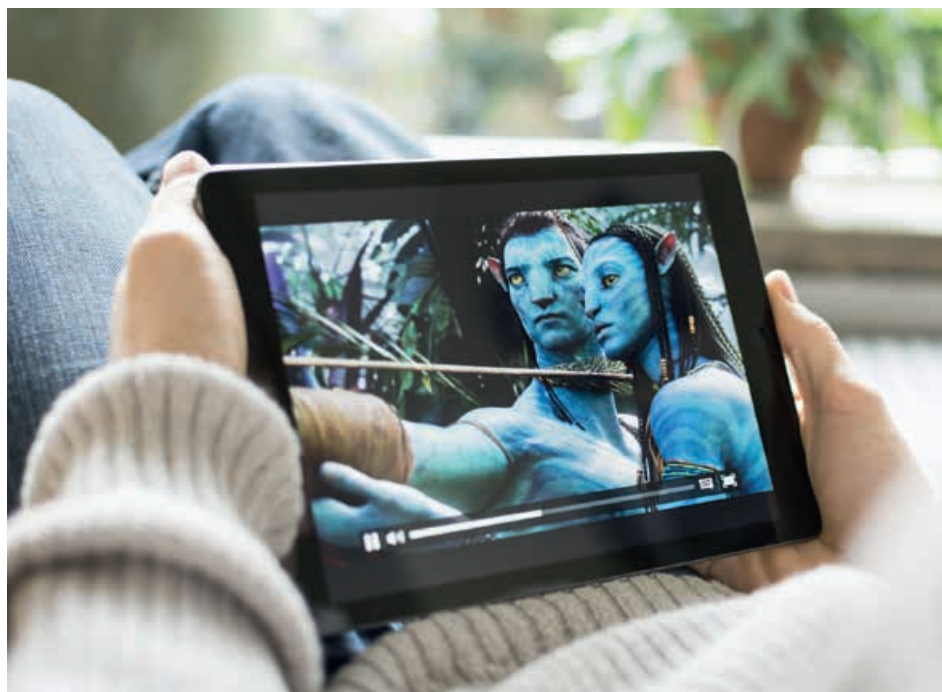
Computer: If you've got a laptop or desktop that isn't getting too much use, you might be able to plug it into your TV via a HDMI port (some Apple devices require a Thunderbolt to HDMI adapter).

Pros: You'll get a bit more use out of that old computer, it's relatively easy to set up and you don't have to spend money on an additional device.
Cons: It can be clunky to navigate using a keyboard and mouse on your

TV, especially if you don't want to get up from your couch. Some desktop fans are noisy.

Smart TV: Most TVs on the market today can connect to the internet and have access to a range of apps for accessing content. Go into your TV settings and set up an internet connection, download the app and you're right to go.

Pros: You don't have to purchase any additional device. Quickflix and Netflix are available on most Smart TVs.



Cons: TV manufacturers are usually better at developing hardware than software; some Smart TVs have really clunky user interfaces and are hard to navigate. No support for Presto or Stan.

Dedicated streaming device

These are almost a must have for streaming content. They are usually low profile, plug into a HDMI port on your TV and require a Wi-Fi or fixed connection.

Google's Chromecast - \$49

Pros: It's the cheapest, has cross platform support (that means you're invited to the Android party Apple and Microsoft fans) and you can access Stan, Presto, Netflix, Quickflix and a range of other streaming options. You can also control it from your smart device, which means you don't have to add another remote control to the pile.

Cons: The lack of remote control is also a con for those that find smart devices a bit too fiddly and prefer to keep it analogue.

Apple TV - \$107

Pros: Okay for an all Apple household. It can access Stan and Netflix as well as a handful of other streaming options.

Cons: You're locking yourself into the Apple eco-system if you go down this path and there is currently no support for Presto or Quickflix.

Xbox 360, Xbox One, PS3, PS4

Pros: Access to Netflix and Quickflix.
Cons: No access to Stan or Presto.

So which should I choose?

All four services offer slightly different TV and movie catalogues and are comparably priced. With no lock in contracts and most free for the first month, prepare to binge. Take the Mr Creosote from Monty Python approach and order one of everything!

Try out each service and see which one offers the content you want on a compatible device.

Just don't get lost in the streaming oasis. Enjoy responsibly and keep track of your data limit!

How much data do I need?

Depending on the picture quality streaming services are likely to take a big chunk out of your monthly download limit. In 2014 the average Australian watched about 20 hours of streamed video content a month. That's about 14-26GB/month per user for standard definition, but with a streaming service you'll probably use more. There are some unlimited broadband deals on the market, but these tend to suffer slowdowns and buffering problems during peak periods. We suggest checking your current usage and shopping around for an easily upgradable plan that can adjust to your future use.

Some ISPs are offering to 'un-meter' data for certain streaming services. This is where downloads don't count toward your monthly data limit. For example, content is unmetered on the following ISPs:

Netflix – iiNet (including its subsidiaries Internode, Westnet and Adam) and Optus broadband.

Presto – Telstra broadband and Foxtel broadband.

How fast does my internet connection have to be?

The other thing you'll need to check is your connection speed; the lowest picture quality streaming services usually require about 2 Mbps to run smoothly. The average Australian internet connection is about 7 Mbps. You can check your connection speed on websites like speedtest.net.

Accessibility

Netflix is currently the only service with closed captions; the others say they have them on the way. None of the services have audio description available and our limited tests showed poor screen reader compatibility when using a PC. Audio described services Zagga Entertainment and TalkingFlix are reportedly launching soon, so hopefully that gap in the market will soon be plugged.



Tips for taking your mobile phone overseas

The Australian telcos have taken action to reduce bill shock from global roaming by introducing roaming plans. As of late last year, Telstra caught up with Optus and Vodafone by introducing global roaming plans for its customers.

But how affordable are these offers? Before you sign up for a roaming plan with your Australian provider, you should consider all of the options and fees involved when using your mobile phone overseas.

The packages from Telstra, Optus and Vodafone range in price from \$5-\$10 per day. If you're travelling overseas for a long time they can be quite pricey!

If you're with a different provider you may still have access to global roaming, but be aware that you will be charged for calls, texts and data at a higher rate than usual.

Before signing up to a roaming deal with your telco you should consider the following:

- Cost
- Which countries you can use your phone in
- What's included
- How to activate global roaming
- How to check your usage
- Charges for going over your limits

While these travel packs are convenient for some consumers as they let you use your own mobile number, budget conscious travellers can consider alternatives such as:

- **Buying a local SIM card when you arrive at your destination to access cheap local rates.** This requires an unlocked handset and a phone that is compatible with the mobile network you have selected, so have your handset ready and check before you buy a local SIM. Remember there are usually lots of alternatives to choose from. If you purchase a local SIM be aware of what's included in the package and who you can contact if you experience issues with the service.
- **Buying a pre-paid roaming SIM card before you go from providers such as TravelSIM, GO-SIM,**

RoamingSIM or gotalk.

Make sure you have all ID documents with you when you buy your prepaid SIM as you will be asked to supply these.

- **Not activating global roaming or purchasing a travel SIM, and instead take advantage of Wi-Fi hotspots while travelling.** Lots of hotels now offer free Wi-Fi to guests, as do many cafes, restaurants and coffee shops. You might have to hunt these hotspots down, but it will save you money on global roaming costs. If you choose this option, choose the apps and online services you use carefully as it is easy for hackers to eavesdrop on open Wi-Fi networks. We urge consumers to weigh up their global roaming options before making a decision. You definitely don't want to come home to a global roaming phone bill that costs more than your actual holiday!

NBN changes in motion

The National Broadband Network (NBN) continues to make headlines. There have been a number of changes to Government policy in the last year, following the decision to deliver broadband through a mix of technologies. The rules and plans that provide for this are starting to take effect now.

As a result, over the last few months the Government, NBN Co and Telstra have been busy changing their plans. We have followed this every step of the way, ensuring that consumer interests are not forgotten.

A snapshot of the changes

NBN Co has made deals with Telstra and Optus to transfer ownership of their infrastructure networks to NBN Co, so these networks can now be used in the rollout. This is a move which NBN Co and the Government claim will make the delivery of broadband faster and cheaper.

Telstra will now have to plan how it will migrate consumers from its network to the NBN with this new mix of technologies, which promises to be a complex process.

Meanwhile, the Government has released new rules requiring all infrastructure providers to be

separated from retail providers. This means that infrastructure providers, in offering their wholesale products, won't be able to favour their own retail provider businesses, and hopefully consumers won't be left with limited choice of services.

The Government has also changed how NBN Co can charge, replacing fixed prices with price caps. This means that NBN Co can reduce its prices in competitive areas to compete, but cannot raise prices in uncompetitive areas.

How NBN Co funds the uncommercial areas is also coming under review by the Department of Communications to make it more transparent.

So how does this affect consumers?

Most of these changes are at the infrastructure level and as consumers you will not notice many of the changes taking place. The change that you may notice is the technology that is used to deliver NBN broadband to your area.

Consumers who are already in the Fibre to the Premises deployment areas will not see any changes in technology. The same goes for consumers in the satellite and fixed wireless areas who will still receive NBN through these technologies. However, consumers who are currently in areas served by

Telstra and Optus' HFC networks are now likely to receive NBN over an upgraded version of these networks. About 30 per cent of premises that lie within the HFC footprint are likely to be connected to the NBN quicker than they would have been under the previous model. Everyone else is likely to receive Fibre to the Node or Fibre to the Basement connections.

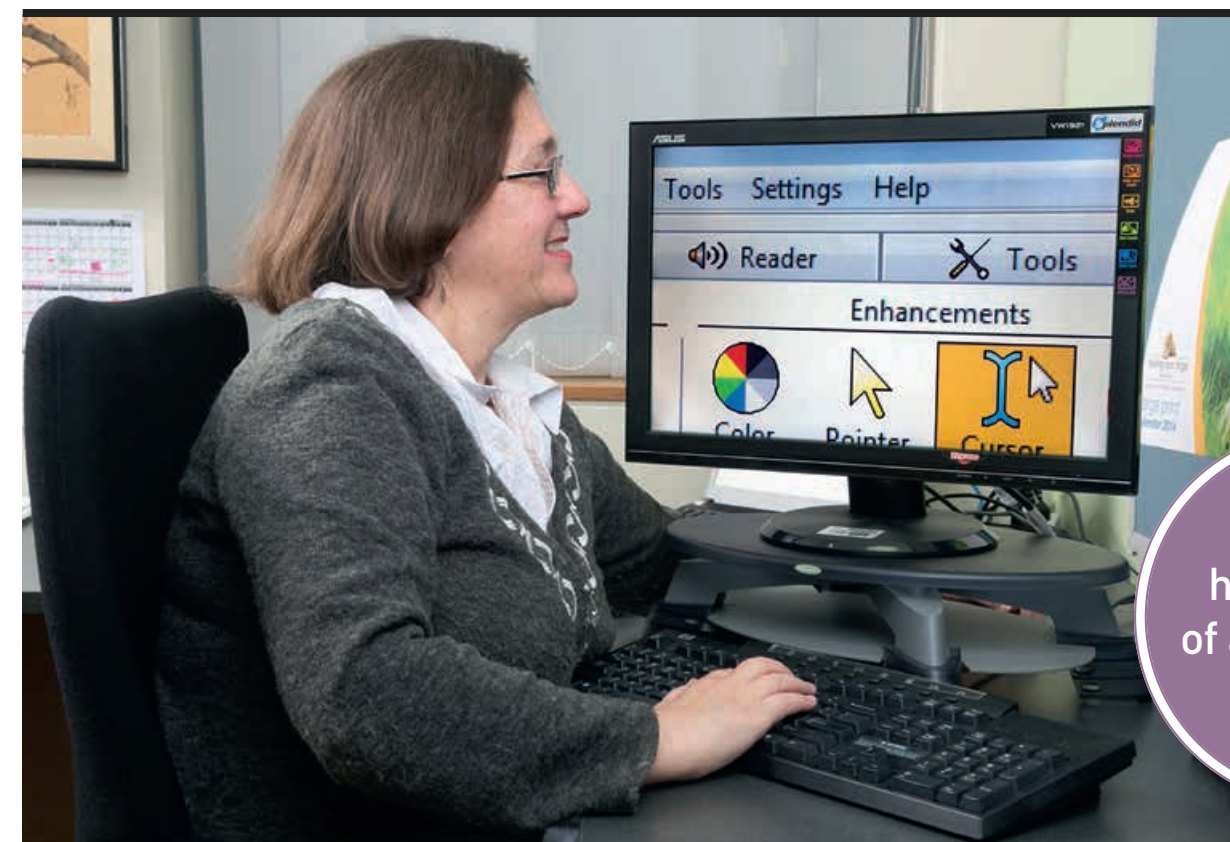
From July, in new developments NBN Co will now charge a connection fee of \$300 per house/apartment. This is similar to Telstra's current arrangements for new developments.

What is ACCAN's role in all of this?

ACCAN has been raising consumer issues with NBN Co and the Department of Communications at each step of the way to ensure that consumers are always considered. We have represented consumer interest through our written submissions, and in some cases follow up meetings. We have also been engaging with NBN Co on the Long Term Satellite Service, which is due to be launched in 2016.

There continues to be a number of complaints about the NBN rollout, including confusion over responsibilities and processes in multi dwelling units, connection issues and delays, and issues with fixed wireless towers. We are engaging with NBN Co, the Department of Communications and the relevant retail providers to address these issues and support initiatives towards improved consumer outcomes.

The Document Accessibility Toolbar (DAT)



The DAT has a range of accessibility functions

Last year an exciting project was awarded funding under the ACCAN Grants Scheme – Vision Australia's Document Accessibility Toolbar (DAT).

Created by accessibility experts from Vision Australia's Digital Access consultancy, the DAT is a ribbon tab that fits within Microsoft Word and has a range of functions to optimise and validate a document for accessibility.

This means that for Microsoft Word users who are creating documents and trying to make them accessible for people with disabilities, including those who have vision impairment or who use a screen reader, a set of dedicated functions will be available in a centralised location to make the process a lot easier.

Around 4 million Australians have

a disability – that's one in five people. The DAT will therefore be relevant to this enormous and broad group of people that may need to use different tools and approaches to access digital content, such as online documents.

The tool automates various parts of accessibility functions, such as prompting authors to apply alt-text when an image is inserted into a document. It also serves as a checklist for accessibility and contains an in-built screen reader so that document authors can simulate the experience of a screen reader user.

These unique and innovative functions will help Word users to confidently and competently create accessible documents so that people with disabilities have equal access to information.

Some of the custom-built functions include:

- A colour contrast 'find and correct' feature. This tool will find examples of insufficient colour contrast between text and background colours. The author can also use the tool to determine accessible colour combinations.
- An automated Word-to-HTML converter.
- The ability to add code to a data table which will allow screen readers to read cell data with its headers.

Vision Australia is currently performing rigorous functional and user testing to make sure the DAT is fully ready for public use. Keep a look out for the global launch of the DAT within the next few months!

ACCAN at events



Yabun Festival

Over the past few months ACCAN has engaged with our members and stakeholders at a range of events. We enjoy the opportunity to interact with consumers and stakeholders face to face to help better inform ACCAN's work in the community.

Here's a snapshot of some of the events we've attended over the past few months:

Yabun Festival

ACCAN attended the 2015 Yabun Festival, held on 26 January in Victoria Park, Sydney.

Yabun is the largest one day celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia.

At the event we were able to share useful information with consumers on topics including: hidden costs in free apps, smartphone bill shock and how to choose an internet service provider.

We also conducted a short survey of attendees (including a giveaway) with some interesting results:

- 67 per cent of people surveyed made a complaint about phone or internet services recently.

- Only 47 per cent of people surveyed felt they were aware or very aware of their rights as a communications consumer.
- Looking online is the most popular place to find out about your rights as a consumer.
- If having difficulty paying for phone or internet services, 59 per cent of people surveyed would ring the service provider to discuss options.
- Only three per cent said they would seek the advice of a financial counsellor if they had difficulty paying for phone or internet services.
- 33 per cent of people had never heard of or weren't sure what the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) was.
- 54 per cent of people surveyed knew the TIO is the free, independent service which helps consumers resolve complaints about phone or internet services.

The National Remote Indigenous Media Festival was held in Bamaga, in the Northern Peninsula Area of Cape York, Queensland



National Remote Indigenous Media Festival

National Remote Indigenous Media Festival

ACCAN Director of Policy, Una Lawrence, attended the 2014 National Remote Indigenous Media Festival held at Bamaga, in the Northern Peninsula Area of Cape York, Queensland. The festival was held from 21-27 September and was attended by 150 delegates from all over the country.

The festival was hosted by the Indigenous Remote Communications Association (IRCA) and featured daily

skills workshops on iPad storytelling, photography, animation, radio journalism and music recording, as well as roundtable discussions on a range of topics.

The important work of remote media organisations was clearly communicated at the festival. These organisations give a voice to people who otherwise wouldn't have one. Their work also helps to preserve cultural heritage and language, empowering communities and bringing them together.

ASCCA Conference

In November, ACCAN was invited to present at the 16th annual Australian Computer Conference for Seniors. The conference is run by ACCAN member organisation, the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association (ASCCA).

Taking place at Rydges World Square in Sydney, ACCAN's Grants and Research Officer, Katerina Pavlidis and Project Officer - Small Business, Kelly

Lindsay, delivered presentations at the conference.

Katerina's presentation focused on our research into how Australians use apps. The presentation explored smartphone penetration in Australia, privacy and security issues with apps and tips on how to choose which apps to download.

Kelly's presentation covered ACCAN's Digital Business Kit, Digital Ready, and outlined the benefits for small businesses (and clubs) to develop and maintain an online presence. To access the Digital Ready training kit, go to digitalready.org.au.

Katerina and Kelly also hosted an information stall at the Conference.

Bring your bills day

In October, ACCAN teamed up with pro bono legal service, MOSAIC, to run a 'Bring your bills day' giving free legal advice and education to newly arrived migrants, refugees or asylum seekers

who need help with any of their bills.

Analysis by MOSAIC found that one in seven of their clients is facing difficulties paying their mobile phone bill. According to the Australian Council of Social Services adults born in countries where English is not the main language are almost 50 per cent more likely to be in poverty compared to those born in Australia.

Access to communications is increasingly an essential service, without which people are disconnected from friends, family and job opportunities.

The event aimed to highlight that some new migrants are unable to pay their bills because they are on visas that prevent them from working. Some of these consumers find themselves in debt when they have signed up to an expensive, long-term post-paid phone contract.

Through an ACCAN grant, MOSAIC will document the experience of migrants who have difficulties paying mobile phone bills, following their journey through seeking legal advice, negotiating with telcos and complaint handling.



ASCCA Conference