Australia's peak body for communications consumers

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WINTER 2015

THIS EDITION:

The Digital Wild:

Your family survival kit

Stormy seas ahead for online pirates
The Copyright Notice Scheme and Dallas Buyers Club

Interview with the first ever Children's eSafety Commissioner

PLUS: Is there value in shared mobile plans? | ACCAN National Conference 2015

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

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Our latest Feature looks at online safety for kids and teens. In 2015, our world is becoming increasingly digital. As a result, kids and teens are spending more and more time online, whether it's for education or entertainment purposes. You can't monitor them 24 hours a day, but you can make sure that your kids and teens are educated about online safety and cyberbullying. You can also educate yourself on tools such as parental controls to keep your kids safe online.

With the Copyright Notice Scheme due to come into effect in September, online piracy is an issue that's on everyone's mind. Traditionally, Australians have had to wait longer and pay more for content than consumers in the US. But with the launch of streaming services and greater access to content than ever before, are these still legitimate reasons to download pirated content? In our Spotlight article, we give you an update on the Copyright Notice Scheme, cover speculative invoicing and the Dallas Buyers Club Federal Court case.

The Tips section will take a look at the emerging data and family sharing mobile plans. These are complex and can be quite confusing for consumers. If you're looking at getting a shared plan, we recommend shopping around to ensure the plan suits your needs. Consider the price and also the data inclusions before making your choice.

Before I sign off for this issue I want to acknowledge the work of Chris Cheah at the ACMA who is stepping down after 10 years. Chris has made a significant contribution to telecommunications consumers through his role in chairing the ACMA Consumer Consultative Forum and the ACMA numbering and emergency services advisory committees. His commitment to explaining complex policy and technical issues in plain language and ensuring the ACMA processes were accessible for consumers, has been much appreciated. He will be missed, but we wish him all the best for the future.

For all the latest ACCAN updates, follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/accanau) or Twitter (www.twitter.com/ACCAN_AU). 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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Chance to share your top tip for small business

ACCAN's online training program, Digital Ready, is currently offering to promote your small business in return for feedback on the training tools. The promotion gives small business owners the chance to share their top tip for other organisations and get free online exposure.

It's simple, all you need to do is complete one or more of the Digital Ready training modules, do the short quiz at the end and provide some feedback on the module. In return, Digital Ready will promote your business via its website, Facebook or LinkedIn profiles for free. Currently there are two offers:

Offer 1: complete one module and you'll get free promotion on Facebook.

Offer 2: complete three or more modules and you'll get free promotion on the Digital Ready website, Facebook and LinkedIn profiles.

Once you complete the short quiz at the end of the assessment, you'll be asked to leave some contact details. The Digital Ready team will then contact you to ask some feedback questions and to get your top tip to share with other small business owners on social media and the Digital Ready website.

Also visit the Digital Ready website (www.digitalready.org.au) to check out our free eBook – Social Media for Business which has tips to help you promote your business through social media platforms.

ACCAN National Conference 2015

We're excited to share some more information on our 2015 National Conference.

This year's Conference, *Dollars and Bytes – Communications affordability now and tomorrow*, will focus on affordability issues in the telecommunications sector.

"We've got lots of great ideas and topics to cover because this is such an important issue for consumers," said ACCAN CEO, Teresa Corbin. "Some of the topics to be covered include competition, affordability and the communications experience of different groups."

The Conference will be held from 1-2 September, 2015 at the UTS Aerial Function Centre.

Registrations will open soon. Go to www.accan.org.au/accanevents for more information.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Do Not Call Register now indefinite

Registrations on the Do Not Call Register are now indefinite! Consumers who are already signed up will no longer face the possibility of having to re-register their numbers.

This is a huge win for consumers and one that will save them the time it takes to re-register every eight years.

With more than 10 million numbers on the register, it's clear that there is a preference amongst Australians not to receive unsolicited telemarketing calls.

We encourage all consumers to sign up to the register to avoid annoying telemarketing calls. It's quick and easy to sign up and now you will only need to do it once.

Go to: www.donotcall.gov.au.

Apps For All Challenge 2015

The Apps For All Challenge 2015 opened for entries on 1 May. This year the competition will once again honour apps which are accessible to all Australians.

The Apps For All Challenge awards apps in the following categories:

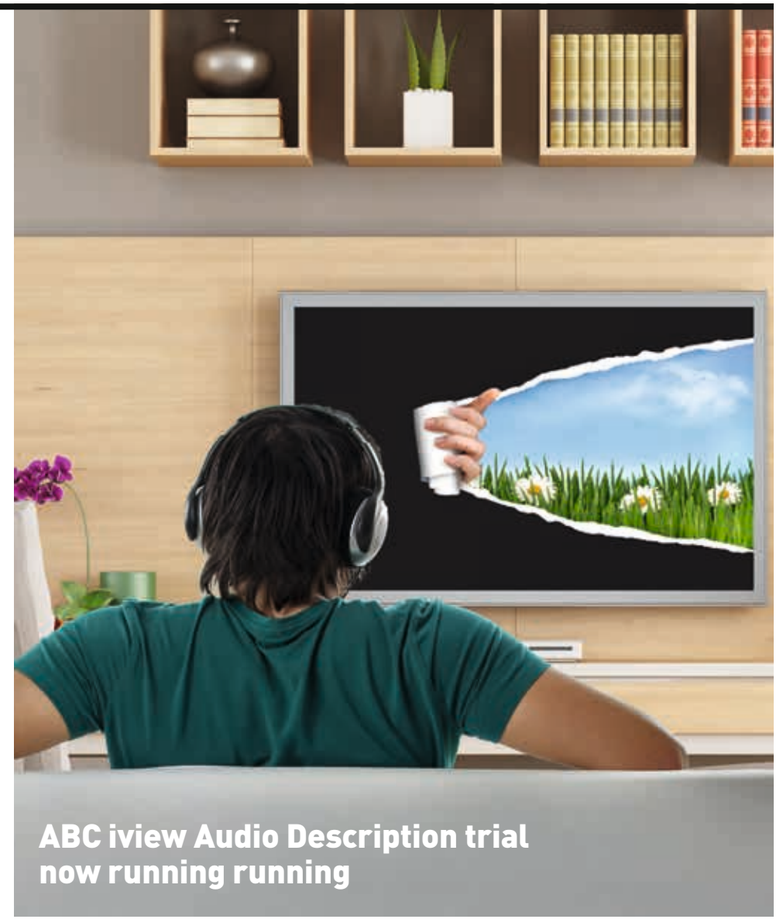
- Most accessible mainstream app
- Most innovative app designed for people with disability or older Australians
- Most accessible children's app
- Most accessible game app

"Last year we handed out prizes to some great apps, but unfortunately we weren't able to award an app in the game category," said Teresa Corbin, ACCAN CEO. "This year we'd like to name a winner for all four categories."

The winners of the Apps For All Challenge 2015 will be announced at ACCAN's National Conference in September.

Last year's winners were: the ACCC Shopper app, OpenMi Tours, Row Row Your Boat and Positive Penguins (two awards were given out in the children's app category).

Entries closed on 15 June 2015.



ABC iview Audio Description trial now running running

In April, ABC started running a trial of Audio Described content on its iview online catch-up service.

The trial will run for 15 months and will provide approximately 14 hours of audio described content each week.

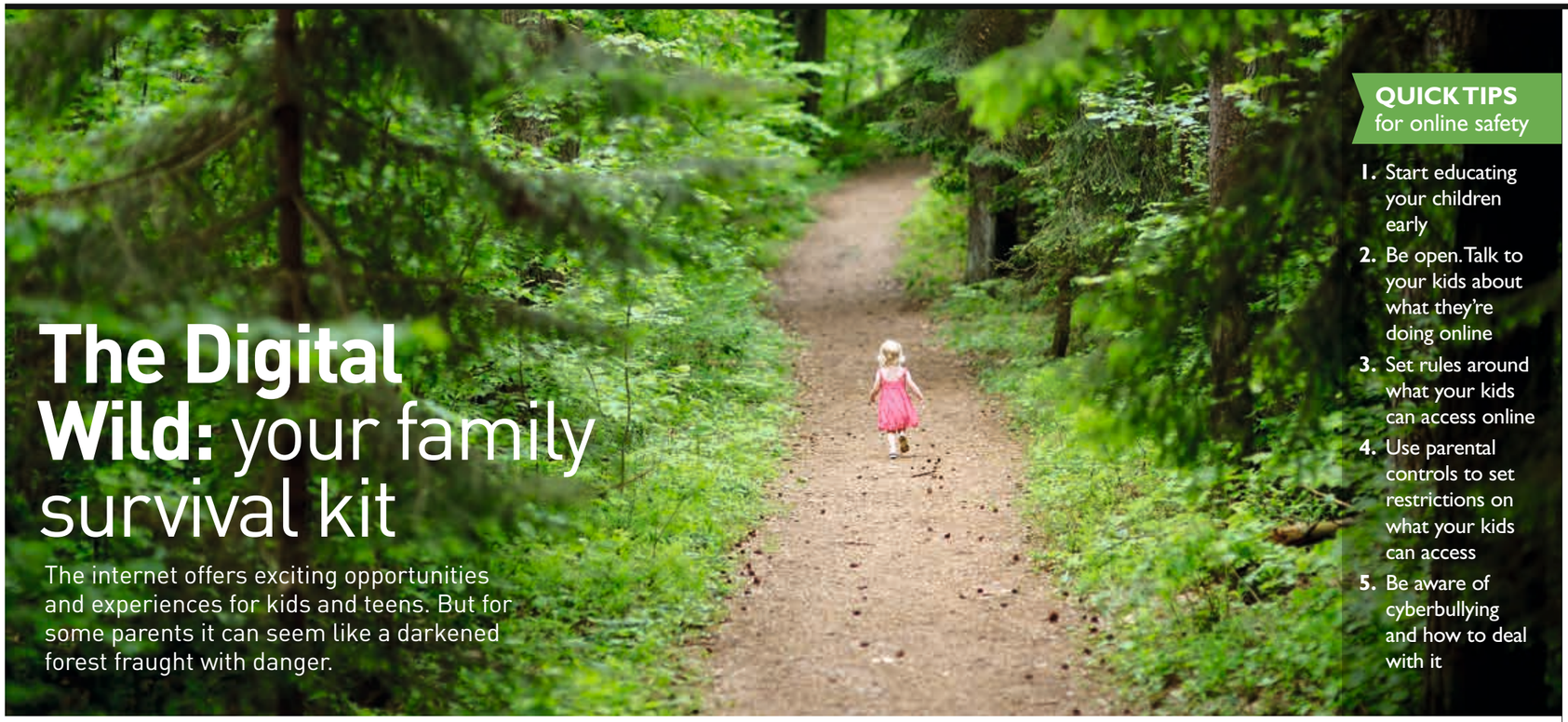
The trial will benefit consumers who are blind or vision impaired and can also be useful to people with learning disabilities as it helps enhance their understanding of what is happening on screen.

ACCAN has been calling on the Australian TV networks to introduce Audio Description for a number of years.

We encourage anyone who could benefit from using Audio Description to download the ABC iview app and give it a go.

Initially the trial will only be available on the iOS platform, with other platforms (Android, ABC website) rolling out in the coming months.

We were also pleased to hear that streaming service, Netflix, will offer Audio Description on a number of its original programs. This is a positive step with Audio Description soon to be available on a selection of TV shows and films. However, at the time of the announcement there were some issues accessing the Netflix platform using a screen reader.



The Digital Wild: your family survival kit

The internet offers exciting opportunities and experiences for kids and teens. But for some parents it can seem like a darkened forest fraught with danger.

There are great aspects of technology - with so much information at their fingertips, apps and the internet can greatly enhance learning and education for kids.

But it should be remembered that the web could potentially expose children to harmful content, cyberbullying or contact with strangers.

Before venturing into the digital wild, children need to know the benefits and the dangers of the digital world.

How to approach cybersafety

It's more than likely that your kids are using computers or tablets regularly at home and at school. In fact a 2013 study from the ACMA found that 95 per cent of eight to 11 year olds had accessed the internet 'in the last four weeks.' Some parents may even find that their children know more about technology than they do!

It's important to try to understand technology and to be aware of the online dangers that exist. There are many online resources and guides that you can access to get up to speed.

We recommend talking to your kids about cybersafety rather than spying on their online activities. Openness is the key and the earlier you start talking to your children about online safety, the better.

It's reasonable to monitor your child's online activities to ensure they are using safe practices, but if you're too restrictive, you may risk them going behind your back and engaging in dangerous online behaviour.

It's important to let your kids know about appropriate online behaviour. For example, you might want to discuss what kinds of websites are acceptable to visit and those which are not. It would also be helpful to outline the kinds of personal information they should never share on social media. Remember, once something is shared online it's hard to get it taken down.

A good approach would be to set up rules around your child's online activities and use of technology. For example, you may want to put a limit on how much time they spend online per day, what apps they can use and which websites they're allowed to visit. Parental controls can help with this.

Parental controls

These are helpful tools for monitoring what your child can and can't access on smartphones, tablets and computers. They will also help you avoid accidental in-app purchases in games and other apps.

With so many devices on the market running different software, it's impossible to cover all of the parental controls in this article.

The majority of devices will probably have in-built controls that will allow you to restrict access to certain applications, software and content. We recommend reading the device manual or consulting the manufacturer's website to get more information and instructions on how to set these up. There are also a range of third party apps available for phones and tablets that allow you to set up parental controls.

Some kids are now also using tablets or computers for school. Enabling parental controls on their school device may inhibit their use of the device at school. Parents should find out the school's policy on parental controls before enabling these on their child's device.

The Cybersmart website (www.cybersmart.gov.au) run by the ACMA, has helpful information on parental controls.

Cyberbullying

Bullying used to just be confined to the school playground. But with social media and other online platforms, there are more opportunities than ever before for kids to be bullied. Research from the ACMA in 2013 found that 17 per cent of 12 to 13 year olds reported that they had been cyberbullied.

The number one reason kids don't report cyberbullying (or inappropriate content) is that they fear their internet privileges will be taken away if they do. It's important to let kids know that they should report these things to you.

The scary thing is that due to the nature of the internet, cyberbullying can take place at any time. It could come from anywhere, not just your child's school, but from random followers on Twitter, or 'friends' on Facebook who they've never actually met.

There are many ways cyberbullies can target victims - through harassing messages, images, videos and so on. This harassment can quickly spread across social media making it worse for the victim and often hard to pin point the source. Deleting inappropriate or harassing material can also be difficult.

Regardless of how your child is bullied, the effects are the same. Here are some tips from the Australian Government Initiative, Stay Smart Online (www.staysmartonline.gov.au), on how to deal with cyberbullying:

- Talk to your kids and encourage them to let you know if they are being bullied
- Block the bully and change privacy settings
- Don't respond to aggressive comments or behaviour as it can make the situation worse
- If someone is posting personal information about your child, report it to your ISP or the social media platform as they may be able to remove it
- Be supportive and let your child know they can get help to deal with the situation
- Collect any evidence of cyberbullying and report it to your child's school. Contact your local police if you have any safety concerns

QUICK TIPS for online safety

1. Start educating your children early
2. Be open. Talk to your kids about what they're doing online
3. Set rules around what your kids can access online
4. Use parental controls to set restrictions on what your kids can access
5. Be aware of cyberbullying and how to deal with it

Gaming, messaging and social media

- Did you know that gaming consoles (PlayStation and Xbox) and gaming apps are connected to the internet? Your children may be exposed to cybersafety threats while playing games on consoles, computers or mobile devices
- Messaging apps, like SnapChat, WhatsApp and Viber, can help you keep in touch with your kids. But be aware that these can also be used to share inappropriate content and can expose your child to strangers. The Cyber Safety Lady (www.thecybersafetylady.com.au) recommends Apple iMessage and Skype as safe messaging apps for kids
- Social media websites have age restrictions for account holders. These are in place for good reason – to protect children from being exposed to strangers and inappropriate content. For more information read "The Easy Guide to Socialising Online" on Cybersmart (www.cybersmart.gov.au)

Your teen's first mobile phone

Research from the ACMA in 2013 showed that 67 per cent of 12 to 13 year olds had a mobile phone. Mobile phones make keeping in touch with your teens easy, but having a mobile phone also means your teen will have greater access to the internet, exposing them further to cybersafety issues.

Teens need to understand that mobile phones can be expensive, especially if they exceed their monthly limits. For teens, a pre-paid plan may be a good option because there's no risk of bill shock.

If you opt for a post-paid contract, you should ensure that the plan is affordable and that you're aware of extra charges, particularly for excess data. These plans are convenient but can sometimes be costly.

Discuss the plans on offer and the best choice with your teen. They may like to spend time comparing the pre/post-paid deals to find the best value offer. This is an excellent way to start training them on financial literacy and consumer rights.

The "Mobile phone deals and plans" article on MoneySmart (www.moneysmart.gov.au) also has helpful information to consider when purchasing a phone plan.

When purchasing a plan for your teen you should:

- Consider the price of the plan. It pays to shop around using websites like WhistleOut.com.au
- Set up expectations around how and when they can use the phone
- Make sure you both know the monthly allowances and how to track these so they aren't exceeded
- Be aware of online threats such as cyberbullying that your teen may be exposed to on their mobile phone

In-app purchases

In-app purchases are charges that occur within an app. For example, in some 'free' games you may get to a point where you have to pay a fee to unlock higher levels.

Sometimes children can accidentally make in-app purchases without realising it. Parents may not find out about these until they see the purchases on their bank statements.

Most smartphones and tablets have in-built features which you can enable to stop these purchases from happening. The ACCAN tip sheet "Hidden costs in free apps" on our website outlines how to enable these restrictions for the iOS App Store, Google Play Store and Amazon Appstore.

The Children's **eSafety Commissioner**

ACCAN spoke to the first ever Children's eSafety Commissioner, Alastair MacGibbon, who will begin in the role later this year. Once the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner is established, parents or children will be able to lodge a complaint online to have offensive or bullying material removed by a social media service.

What do you see as the main dangers children face online?

Government research shows that cyberbullying is the number one risk our kids are likely to encounter online. The research also indicates that one in five Australian children between the ages of 8 – 17 are affected in some way by cyberbullying per annum, and the problem is getting worse.

Cyberbullying is a growing social problem for our younger generations, as they're not reflecting the same behavioural norms online, as they are offline.

This has serious implications for the affected children and their families. Children who suffer from cyberbullying often become socially excluded, withdrawn, their school grades drop, and their confidence also declines. Cyberbullying can lead to even more serious consequences such as self-harm or suicide.

What are some of the good aspects of children venturing into the digital world?

The internet has opened up an abundance of positive opportunities for children to learn, create, connect and communicate online.

Apps and internet devices can make learning more fun for young people and there are also benefits when parents use these with their child.

Learning based online games are also a great way to keep kids entertained, while learning. Children's empathy and helpfulness can increase by playing games that reward users for building a town or helping others. However parents should be wary of the negative effects associated with excessive exposure to some online games, especially those with violence.

As long as parents are aware of what their children are accessing, and the amount of content they're exposed to, they can help kids stay safe and become good digital citizens.

How will you address cyber-bullying in the role of Children's eSafety Commissioner?

While our legislative powers relate to the rapid removal of cyberbullying material, working with social media services to do so, the success of the Office ultimately lies in changing the environment on the internet, so it's less tolerant of cyberbullies in the first place.

To do this the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner will implement measures, including:

- Providing access to educational material and counselling services for children and young people affected by cyberbullying.
- Administering a complaints system for reporting and rapidly removing serious cyberbullying material.
- Administering a funding program for the delivery of online safety programs in schools.
- Working with police on criminal matters.
- Supporting non-government organisations in their efforts towards cybersafety issues.

What advice would you give to parents who are concerned about online safety?

- Monitor your child's internet use, while giving them enough space in their teenage years so they don't feel like you're spying on them.
- Maintain open, two-way communication, especially as they grow older, so they're comfortable to speak with you when they experience a problem online.
- Set house rules about when and where they can access the internet and the types of websites and games they can access.
- Advise them to never share their passwords with friends and to keep their personal information private.

Stormy seas ahead for **online pirates**

No doubt the recent Federal Court decision in the Dallas Buyers Club case made many online pirates jump ship and think twice about downloading illegal pirated content.

For a long time, Australians have received a raw deal in regard to how we access entertainment content, the costs and when we can access it. After all, Dallas Buyers Club didn't reach Australia until a few months after its US release.

The value of film and other cultural experiences isn't just in the viewing but in the conversation it creates. Increasingly these conversations take place on a global scale. Delayed release dates stop these conversations from happening, lead to spoilers and unmet demand which fuels piracy.

But now there are more options for legally accessing content than ever before, so content addicts should be rejoicing. We expect that the introduction of streaming services will benefit many consumers and help to curb piracy in Australia.

In the past you might have downloaded pirated content with little thought, but these practices are illegal. Soon a 'three strikes' Copyright Notice Scheme will come into effect and there is also the risk of more rights holders directly pursuing pirates like in the Dallas Buyers Club case.

If your main method of accessing content is downloading illegal pirated material, it's time to remove your eye patch and check out the legal methods to fulfil your entertainment needs.

Why do people pirate?

It's no secret that Australia is home to many online pirates. We love our TV and movies and when we can't access them at reasonable prices and at the same time as the US, many resort to online piracy.

When the latest season of Game of Thrones was released, Australia had the most downloaders per capita. Of all 'viewers' in Australia in the first three days it was estimated 32 per cent were pirates.

Frustration with delayed movie releases and lack of access to our favourite TV shows has helped foster an acceptance of online piracy, despite the fact that it is a violation of intellectual property rights.

Downloading pirated material is an online behaviour that parents should talk to teens about. We recommend educating teens on why these practices are illegal and letting them know the consequences of this behaviour. It's also essential that parents ensure that their Wi-Fi connections are secure so random users can't connect and download illegal content. Also be aware of who you allow to connect to your internet connection as these users could engage in online piracy.

The practice of free-to-air networks changing TV timeslots with no notice and airing episodes out of order has added to the frustration. How many times have you gone to watch a TV show only to find that it now airs on a different day, or has been moved to a late night timeslot?

However, we are starting to see change. Our content options have increased with the launch of new streaming services. The free-to-air networks now all offer catch-up services so you can watch your favourite shows when you want online.

Consumers also have the option to purchase content through iTunes, Google Play and other online stores. You can even access geo-blocked content using a Virtual Private Network (VPN).

With all of these options available, the traditional arguments for downloading pirated material don't stack up anymore.

The Copyright Notice Scheme 2015

The Copyright Notice Scheme 2015 will see internet service providers (ISPs) forced to collect information on consumer downloads. If you're found to be downloading pirated content you'll get sent a notice.

If you receive three of these notices in one year you could be taken to court by a rights holder seeking damages for online copyright infringement.

ACCAN has raised a number of consumer concerns, and has so far been able to keep sanctions (like disconnecting consumers from the internet) out of the Code.

It's also not clear who will foot the bill to implement the scheme and we're still concerned it may be misused to send consumers speculative invoices demanding money.

How to find content that you can access legally

Check out these content search engines to help find the content you want:

JustWatch.com
Covers Quickflix, Netflix, Presto and Stan and will give you options to rent and buy content from iTunes, Google Play and PlayStation.

Gyde.tv
Lets you search through a range of streaming services but currently only caters to movies.

Speculative invoicing

Speculative invoicing is the practice of rights holders sending letters to consumers demanding payments for copyright infringement. These letters usually threaten legal action but then offer consumers the choice to settle the dispute out of court.

How much did it cost you last time you watched a movie? I'm guessing it wasn't $9,000! That's how much some consumers overseas have paid to avoid legal action.

While Dallas Buyers Club did win the court case, the judge will review the first letter they send to consumers to ensure no speculative invoicing takes place. However, the judge has expressed concern over how much control he will have over the content of the letter considering the rights holder operates in another country.

Depending on the definition, speculative invoicing may or may not be legal in Australia.

If you ever receive such a letter you should seek independent legal advice before taking any other action.

Website blocking

The Copyright Amendment (Online Infringement) Bill 2015 allows rights holders to seek a court injunction to block overseas websites that host or link to pirated material.

ACCAN has raised a number of issues, such as allowing interested parties to give evidence on the public interest of websites to prevent them from being blocked.

ACCAN sees the Bill as an opportunity to address the legality of using a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to access overseas content. Many Australians are using these services to access legitimate geo-blocked content. VPNs are also used for security measures or to access other legal overseas applications.

ACCAN's advice

Netflix, Presto and Stan, are low-cost and at the time of writing each offer a free one month trial. If it's free why not give each a go? See which one suits your needs before signing up. None of these services lock you into a contract so you can cancel at any time.

Streaming services give you the freedom to access content when you want it. Depending on the service, you can watch content on your tablet, smart TV, computer or on a smartphone. Just remember to keep an eye on your data usage, especially if you're using a mobile network.

If you can afford it, you might want to sign up to more than one service so you get access to a wider range of content.

Consider using catch-up services to watch your favourite free-to-air shows online.

If your source of entertainment content is pirated material, in the future you may receive a copyright notice. Online piracy is a violation of intellectual property rights and by engaging in this behaviour you may leave yourself open to legal action from rights holders.

Put simply, it's not worth the risk of downloading illegal content when there are more streaming and content options available than ever before to fulfil your needs.

Is there value in **shared mobile plans?**

Mobile providers are now offering sharing plans for people to share data among devices, for families to share a phone plan between them, or a combination of both.

Sharing data between devices
To share data between devices you need to connect each device with a SIM card, purchased from your provider. The data used under these SIMs gets charged to the same bill.

What are the benefits?
These can benefit consumers who like to access the internet using multiple devices. It can also be handy if the shared devices are used outside the household, such as on tablets, so they can easily connect to the internet.

Available plans
- On Telstra you can share your data with five additional devices for $5/month for each additional SIM card
- On Optus you can pay a once off $5 fee for an additional SIM card to share your data. You can share with up to five devices
- Vodafone's data sharing plans start from $10/month to share data with a tablet. This plan includes 1GB of extra data

Sharing between people
These allow you to add additional phones for other people to your plan. All of the allowances – data, text and calls – can be shared. The costs for all the phones are billed to one plan.

What are the benefits?
These plans allow you to share unused allowances with your family, so nothing goes to waste. For example you could add phones for your partner and children to your plan. This can be beneficial if members of your family want to share data allowances.

Available plans
- Telstra's Go Mobile plans let you add extra voice services to your base plan. For example, parents can add plans for their children and share their data across these plans. These can be managed on the same account
- On Optus' Family Sharing plans, families can pool their data allowances together for no extra cost. All the mobile plans will appear on the same bill
- If you're on a Vodafone Red Plan, you can share your text, voice and data allowance with another mobile phone. You will need to choose a share plan, these start from $30/month which includes an extra 1GB of data

Things to consider
Sharing data could increase your data usage. Always keep track of your data usage to ensure you don't go over your allowance, as providers charge extra for this.

Before signing up you should consider the price and inclusions of the plan. These shared plans can be confusing, expensive and they may not be good value for money.

Do you need a sharing plan?
Probably not. The cheapest way to share data between nearby devices is to activate a Wi-Fi hotspot on your phone. This would work well for someone who wants to share their data allowance between their phone and tablet. The downside is this chews through the battery on your mobile phone quicker than usual, so we wouldn't recommend using it for long periods of time. You also have to be within range of your phone to share the data, so this solution isn't ideal for sharing across the whole family.

When choosing a plan always consider the individual's mobile usage. Sharing phone plans might lead to increased data usage and leave you open to additional charges. Phone usage for children might be better monitored on pre-paid services.

Changing the way **Deafblind consumers** access customer service

Many consumers who are Deafblind – those with hearing and vision loss – struggle to access the customer service of their telecommunications providers over the phone.

In addition, text based services, such as those used with the National Relay Service, or the live chat options offered by providers, are often also difficult to use for this group of otherwise independent consumers.

Communication with providers is difficult for a range of reasons. Sometimes simply because English is not their first language and concepts related to the digital and online worlds are not easily translated into their primary language, Auslan (Australian Sign Language).

In some cases it is because the web pages and text programs used are not easily navigated under large amounts of zoom.

Current information security and privacy practices prevent consumers who are Deafblind from using an Auslan interpreter to access customer service by phone because they are unable to provide voice verification of identity.

While protecting privacy is of high importance, the reliance on voice verification to enable interaction over the phone discriminates against the Deafblind community on the basis of their disability as it prevents them from managing their accounts.

Simply nominating a person to act as an authorised representative doesn't solve the problem, either, as it is quite common for consumers who are Deafblind to use different interpreters on different occasions.

Image: David Marks, 2014

These consumers need to be able to interact with telecommunications providers through a third party of their choosing. This process must also ensure that their personal information is protected.

A study by Able Australia, with funding from the ACCAN Grants Scheme, aimed to outline a model by which consumers who are Deafblind can access their provider's telephone customer service with independence and on a level comparable to that of hearing/sighted consumers.

Able Australia surveyed systems overseas, and worked with people who are Deafblind, their facilitators, and telecommunications service providers to come up with a secure and practical solution acceptable to everyone.

The proposed solution for the Deafblind community is the adoption of a personal identification number (PIN).

Able Australia believes that a unique PIN should provide sufficient identity verification for consumers who are Deafblind when provided with other account information.

The report, ***Assisted Access,*** outlines ways to add extra security around this process. For example, the PIN could be randomly generated prior to each interaction and then sent to consumers via SMS or email. The PIN could also take the form of a number assigned to the customer's account.

Industry feedback was sought on implementing the new system. Jeenee Mobile was receptive and has already implemented this change to allow consumers who are Deafblind to access customer service using a PIN.

It is hoped that other telecommunications service providers will soon also allow consumers who are Deafblind to use a PIN when accessing customer service through a third party and ACCAN is actively working towards this end.

Helping young people with legal problems

The National Children's and Youth Law Centre (NCYLC) is a not-for-profit organisation that helps children and young people across Australia to resolve their problems through free, youth-friendly legal information, advice and assistance. It is the only service of its kind in Australia. On average, 3190 people contact the centre every day through its online services or by phone.

The centre provides easy to understand legal information for young people via its website, *Lawstuff* (www.lawstuff.org.au). Young people who need additional support can also get free and confidential help through the centre's legal advice service, *Lawmail* (www.lawstuff.org.au/Lawmail).

Through *Lawmail,* the centre directly helped more than 1,600 young people in 2014, and through *Lawstuff* the centre indirectly helped well over 1.1 million users.

Online safety issues

In just five years, online safety issues have risen from one to 25 per cent of the centre's casework. This rapid growth rate is continuing.

"We are now helping victims of cyberstalking, cyberbullying, revenge pornography, blackmail - financial and sexual, filmed assault, secret surveillance or grooming every day," said NCYLC Director, Matthew Keeley.

Research undertaken by the centre with a consortium led by the Social Policy Research Centre at UNSW, confirmed that between two thirds to half of all cyberbullying is unreported. This indicates that there are many young people who are uncomfortable reporting their online problems to parents or authorities.

"We find that young victims of online sexual abuse are especially isolated and in need of support. They often tell us that they don't think they can report their problem to anyone. In these matters, we may be the only adults that they have confided in. That is a profound responsibility and we take it very seriously."

The *Lawstuff* pages about online safety issues and mobile phone consumer matters are incredibly popular with young people and teachers. "In 2014, those pages had over 325,000 views. That clearly demonstrates how strong the interest in these issues is nationally," Mr Keeley said.

Responding to online safety issues

"When dealing with online safety, the most important thing of course is the young person's safety and well-being and really listening to them. At the start of each day we assess the new contacts made overnight and attend to all critical matters as a priority," said Mr Keeley. "More often than not, the online harm matters are regarded as in need of priority attention due to high levels of emotional distress reported by the young person or disclosure of associated real-world violence or harm."

The centre will always refer the young person to counselling, medical or other critical services as needed before anything else. The centre emphasises effective problem-solving over and above costly, time-consuming legalistic responses. Solutions are tailored to the individual's unique circumstances.

Young people are given practical advice about how to minimise any dispute as well as technical advice on things like changing digital privacy settings or making reports.

The centre will also advise young people about the important role that the civil or criminal law can play as well as the role of other stakeholders.

Mr Keeley says that it's important that young people are given accurate legal advice because inappropriate advice can create greater risk to the victim.

"A case in point is the practice in one state whereby police are frequently charging the young subjects of revenge pornography."

"In this particular state girls, who are often the creator and subject of the image are caught in a Catch-22 situation. They need the assistance of the police to intervene, but if they report the matter to police they are likely to be charged!" Mr Keeley said.

A broader approach to online safety

As a national service with clients from each state and territory, the centre is in a unique position to note the similarities, differences and opportunities arising across Australia regarding online safety incidents and responses.

"We have used our experience to build relationships with decision-makers at the national level. The centre is now represented on the Commonwealth government's Cyber Safety Consultative Working Group for example," said Mr Keeley. "The centre has also undertaken leading research and education work and has successfully advocated to change state and federal laws concerning cyberbullying and sexting to better protect young people."

The centre was the leading NGO contributor to the *Enhancing Online Safety for Children Act*, which establishes a Children's eSafety Commissioner to resolve cyberbullying complaints and a system of take-down notices to remove bullying content from the internet.

The centre's future

In the future, the centre expects even greater demand for its services and at this stage, the centre's staff is the only team of lawyers offering practical knowledge and technical help to young people nationally. With continued growth, the centre is now at peak capacity and in need of more financial and human resourcing to keep up with the demand.

"Without additional resourcing, thousands of young people will not receive our help. So I have to hope that the future includes finding a significant partner to invest in the centre so that we can meet the huge amount of unmet need, not just in the area of online safety but young people's legal problems generally."