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## Media Release

**Thursday, 29th June 2023**

### ACCAN awards seven new communications consumer grants

Australia's peak communications consumer advocacy group, the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN), has today announced 7 projects that it will fund through the 2023 Round of its Independent Grants Program.

The ACCAN Independent Grants Program funds consumer-focused projects to undertake research, represent consumers, and create educational tools which empower consumers to make decisions in their own interests.

The operation of ACCAN's Independent Grant Program is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997.

A total of 46 applicants from a variety of community, university and research organisations applied for funding covering a wide range of important communications consumer topics.

ACCAN CEO Andrew Williams said the organisation was looking forward to working with the successful applicants and seeing the various ways the consumer experience of digital services could be improved.

"Our grants projects help us, and the broader sector, better understand a wide range of issues facing consumers, from digital inclusion, smartphone sharing, and the ongoing accessibility problems faced by people with disability when accessing their phone and internet services." he said.

The Independent Grants Program helps to get high quality information out to consumers, regulators and the industry."

"We look forward to working with our latest successful applicants as they undertake these exciting projects."

Further information on the successful applicants can be found at [accan.org.au/grants](http://accan.org.au/grants)

## 2023 Grants Projects

### **Griffith University**

#### **Smartphone sharing with intimate partners: Implications for telecommunications consumer cybersecurity**

Expected completion: 2025

Funded: 2023

Amount: \$48,478

While cybersecurity self-help advice is readily available to consumers, most resources are focused on preventing unintended sharing of devices, passwords, accounts, and personal information. This advice is ill-suited to intimate relationship contexts where sharing is common. A lack of baseline knowledge about smartphone-sharing practices and the reasons behind them has hampered Australian efforts to strengthen consumer cybersecurity. This project will create a new evidence base to understand everyday consumer smartphone sharing in intimate relationships using a survey and interviews with diverse consumers, to improve privacy protections and cybersecurity for all Australians.

### **Western Sydney University**

#### **First Nations Digital Inclusion in Western Sydney**

Expected completion: 2025

Funded: 2023

Amount: \$92,500

Indigenous people in Western Sydney are experiencing digital divide. This interdisciplinary project will co-design with an Indigenous scholar and will be overseen by an Indigenous Research Governance Committee. By building on established relationships with Indigenous residents in Western Sydney, the project will provide needed data on Indigenous digital exclusion in Western Sydney and will provide Indigenous co-designed recommendations for closing the digital gap.

### **Deakin University**

#### **Defining Communication in a Digital Era: What Best Protects Diverse Consumers?**

Expected completion: 2025

Funded: 2023

Amount: \$75,000

This project will explore how communication is defined and implications for reforms to the laws of information privacy, telecommunications surveillance, and digital markets. The team will conduct focus groups with diverse communities to enhance consumer advocacy and representation in submissions to proposed reforms and improve consumer protections.

## **Center For Accessibility Australia**

### **Plan cancellations for all: Supporting consumers with disability in identifying accessible support processes by Telco providers**

Expected completion: 2025

Funded: 2023

Amount: \$74,466

Consumers with disability have reported to the CFAA that there is a lack of adequate mobile plan cancellation options with support limited to text-based AI chatbots and no alternative phone, email, or TTY support. This project will evaluate the support and cancellation process of all Australian companies providing a mobile SIM and create consumer resources for disability groups. Telcos will be provided guidance to improve their support offerings and accessibility to consumers with disability.

## **Digital Literacy Foundation**

### **Hawkesbury Digital Mentoring Program**

Expected completion: 2024

Funded: 2023

Amount: \$90,000

Working towards universal digital inclusion is critical. In partnership with local Council and community organisations, this project will operate locally-based, face-to-face digital mentoring services for people in the Hawkesbury region. Workshops will build on a successful pilot program focused on increasing consumers' access to online information, communications products, and services.

With many services digitised, older Hawkesbury residents are increasingly isolated, as the region's rivers, bushland, unsealed roads, and devastation following fires (2019) and multiple floods (2022) has reduced access to physical services. The Hawkesbury region has a higher proportion of 50 to 84-year-olds than Greater Sydney (Census 2021), a group which, according to the Australian Digital Inclusion Index, are more likely to experience digital exclusion. The program aims to improve access to communication channels with community, family and government, including telehealth, and provide opportunities for increased social connectedness, and participation in online social and economic activities.

## Deaf Australia

### Fortifying “What standards? The need for evidence-based Auslan translation standards and production guidelines”

Expected completion: 2025

Funded: 2023

Amount: \$100,000

Since publication of the ‘[What Standards?](#)’ Auslan translation guidelines in 2015, the NDIS and pandemic have significantly reshaped Auslan user needs. This project will evaluate and update these guidelines by reviewing current usage and compliance across Australia, improving guidelines for Deafblind consumers, and incorporating emerging Auslan-first products, often viewed as a better alternative to translations. Ultimately, the findings will provide Auslan translation guidelines for current and foreseeable requirements, deeper consideration of Deafblind needs, and an understanding of when Auslan-first products should be produced instead of Auslan translations.

## South Australian Council on Intellectual Disability

### Co-designing accessible online safety resources for people with intellectual disability

Expected completion: 2024

Funded: 2023

Amount: \$89,173

People with intellectual disability are at greater risk to the dangers of the online environment. However, there is limited educational information presented in formats accessible to people with intellectual disability. This project will build on an existing co-designed introductory online safety workshop to develop a series of accessible training resources focused on online safety. A co-design approach will be used to develop, test and refine the products, and gather information about communications related barriers to inform future advocacy.

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***The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia’s peak communication consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.***

***ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia’s past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. [Read our RAP](#)***

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