New Standards Welcomed by Consumers

ACCAN welcomes the ACMA's release of the Service Continuity and Consumer Information Standards.

'These are important safeguards that will help make the move to NBN-based services easier for consumers, and ACCAN has been calling for such measures for some time' said Teresa Corbin, ACCAN CEO. 'Many consumers have contacted us about a range of frustrating experiences as they try to navigate their way between their retail telco and NBN. We welcome these measures, which we believe will go some way to reducing these problems'

Both Standards are part of a package of measures announced by the Minister for Communications last year to address the significant difficulties experienced by some consumers as they switch their services over to the National Broadband Network (NBN). It is important that these measures are in place now with the number of premises migrating over to NBN ramping up significantly in the next 18 months. NBN's Corporate Plan shows an expected 2.5 million premises will be activated in the 2019 financial year, up from 2 million in FY 2018.

The Service Continuity Standard is intended to ensure that consumers are not left stranded without services, and the Consumer Information Standard is designed to ensure retail service providers give customers a check list of essential information before the switch.

'While many people have had a straightforward time switching their services over with minimal interruptions, we know that when things go wrong people have suffered massive disruption by being without services, sometimes for extended periods' said Ms Corbin.

However, the Service Continuity Standard will not apply to areas flagged for FTTN/B, or FTTC NBN services due the technical challenges and barriers in implementing it identified by the industry.

'While we appreciate there are a number of technical challenges here, we're still disappointed that the telcos, NBN and the ACMA haven't been able to deliver the same assurances across the board for all consumers who are still to switch over to NBN, regardless of the technology used. There are many consumers within the FTTN/B and FTTC footprints who will be depending on the ACMA to provide them with equivalent protections in the final piece of this government response – the Line Testing Determination – which has not yet been finalised'.

It is essential that the requirement to provide an interim service when switch over fails, as provided for under the Service Continuity Standard, is extended to those consumers moving to FTTN/B and FTTC services, so that no consumer is left without a service as a result of a technical fault when they move to the NBN.

ACCAN also welcomed the new Consumer Information Standard as an important way of ensuring that consumers are getting the basic, critically important, information they need before the switchover.

'The NBN switch forces all of us to make decisions about our home voice and internet services. Consumers need to be equipped with easy-to-understand information about the basics – such as the impact of power outages, and where to go to find out whether their medical and household alarms will work over the new network, and the new Standard will provide this' said Ms Corbin.

'We know that consumer information isn't a substitute for good service, but it at least puts people in a better position as they arrange their transition to the NBN' added Ms Corbin.

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