

Media release

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New draft rules for telcos released today for public comment

ACCAN says it welcomes the release of a draft revised Telecommunications Consumer Protection (TCP) Code today, giving stakeholders a month to provide feedback as to whether the new rules will improve consumer protections for Australian residential and small business customers.

ACCAN Chief Executive Teresa Corbin, a member of the Code review's Steering Committee, says for more than 15 months consumer representatives have worked alongside industry to try to improve the self-regulatory Code.

"These are the rules that prescribe how telcos should treat their customers in relation to sales, customer service, billing, faults and complaint handling," said Ms Corbin.

"We know that in recent years complaints about the industry to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) have been steadily climbing. This revised Code attempts to address some of these points of pain for consumers."

Ms Corbin says while the draft revised TCP Code falls short of some of the main consumer protections advocates wanted, there are some improvements around notifications for customers and a requirement for telecommunications providers to resolve complaints more quickly.

ACCAN says monitoring and compliance of the revised Code will be crucial if the industry is to see a drop in the high number of complaints received by the TIO from telco customers.

"With a self-regulatory Code governing an industry as vital as telecommunications, the biggest issue is making sure that providers abide by the rules," said Ms Corbin.

"[Peak industry body] Communications Alliance proposes that it set up its own compliance and monitoring arm to be the independent watchdog. We're not convinced that this is best practice and will be making further comment about that in our submission."

The regulator, the Australian Communications & Media Authority (ACMA), has given telcos until February 2012 to improve the Code in six key areas or face mandatory regulations.

[The draft revised TCP Code](#) is open for public comment until November 25th 2011 via the Communications Alliance website.

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About ACCAN

ACCAN (Australian Communications Consumer Action Network) is Australia's peak communications consumer organisation. ACCAN's goal is available, accessible and affordable communications that enhances the lives of consumers. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Australian government.