

Media release

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Telco industry scores an 'F' on annual complaints scorecard

The telco industry had more than 197,000 new complaints from its customers lodged with the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman [in the last financial year](#), representing a 17.8% increase on the previous year's result and making this the highest number of complaints on record.

The top three issues for consumers were again customer service, complaint handling, and billing and payments.

"The telco industry has scored another 'F' this year for customer service and complaint handling for failing to address its customers' problems in a timely manner," ACCAN Chief Executive Officer Teresa Corbin said today.

"Worryingly still, while complaints are higher than they have ever been, [research tells us](#) these complaints are only the tip of the iceberg. There are many more customers who are unaware of the TIO's existence or simply worn down by the many hours spent trying to resolve complaints over the phone with their telcos."

ACCAN says while Vodafone's well-publicised network issues have contributed to the 51.4% rise in the number of complaints about mobiles, complaints are up across the board for all of the top ten telecommunications providers, with the exception of the nation's biggest provider, Telstra, which has had a 3% decrease in complaints.

ACCAN says now is a crucial time for the industry, [which has been given a February deadline](#) by the telecommunications regulator, the Australian Communications & Media Authority, to ensure adequate consumer protections are put in place through the industry's own Code or face regulatory intervention.

"This consistently high level of complaints year-on-year to the Ombudsman and the length of time it takes the average customer to have a problem fixed is an untenable situation," said Ms Corbin.

"Consumer detriment has been so significant over such an extended period in this area that we believe the introduction of regulation in the form of a complaints-handling service provider determination or a standard is the only way the industry is going to change."

[Research released by the TIO](#) earlier this year found that more than 60% of customers surveyed who had filed a complaint with the Ombudsman had spent three or more hours unsuccessfully trying to solve their complaint before approaching the TIO, with one in five having spent more than nine hours trying to resolve their complaint.

"This dire situation cannot be allowed to continue where you have hundreds of thousands of Australian customers receiving the short shrift from companies providing essential communication services."

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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.