

Quarter 2, FY17-18

The summary below outlines ACCAN's activities from 1 September – 30 November 2017.

The last quarter has been extremely active in the telecommunications sector, with the release of the Productivity Commission's report into the USO, the introduction of the Telecommunications Reform Package into Federal Parliament, and other numerous industry and government initiatives. The ACCAN policy team has been actively engaged with these and other developments. It is pleasing that we have continued to achieve significant impact through our representation of consumer interests, including increased data allowances for SkyMuster customers; Telstra's decision to withdraw from new subscription third party billed services; Senate support for retention of the competition notice regime in the Competition and Consumer Act, and incorporation of ACCAN feedback in the ACCC broadband speed guidelines.

ACCAN participated in a range of meetings reflecting much of the various reforms being canvassed this quarter. ACCAN participated in a total of 15 different representative body meetings including several meetings of the CA Working Committee reviewing the Mobile Premium Service Code of Practice, and other codes under review such as the TCP Code and the Mobile Base Station Deployment Code. There were 15 meetings with government and regulatory bodies and 14 industry liaison and engagement meetings. Note some industry meetings have been reclassified to standing committees this reporting period. The 2017 ACCAN National Conference – ACCANect – was held.

The ACCAN Board approved the nine recommendations from the Independent Grants Panel for funding projects and negotiations commenced with each of the recipients to complete a funding contract. Four contracts have been signed, three have been agreed and are pending signature, and two are close to agreement with all expected to be closed before the end of the calendar year. A separate report was furnished to DoCA on the independent grants process with the previous quarter report. The ACCAN Board received an appeal against a grant application result, which was resolved. No changes to the recommended awards were made and the process undertaken to award the grants was upheld.

Three projects from the previous round released publications (see below) and a paper was accepted by the IEEE Technology and Society magazine on the results of the UNSW Inside Job (internet of things) project.

A short project was undertaken with SACOSS to analyse the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2015-16 Household Expenditure Survey. Key findings include that telecommunications are a significant household expenditure and on average, households spend more on telecommunications than on energy. These findings will be released with an infographic prior to the end of the calendar year. A project was completed with the University of Melbourne to update a previous study on Death and the Internet: Consumer issues in planning and managing digital legacies and the report published on the ACCAN website. This updates the work with some of the legislation changes throughout the world and includes more recent, helpful controls implemented in Gmail and Facebook.

The results of ACCAN'S 2017 Disability Mystery Shopping report were detailed in a blog published in September. The extensive post summarised the scope and methodology of the report. The latest results were compared to the 2014 mystery shopping project which showed there had not been any improvements in the availability of information about accessible products and services since 2014.

The 2017-18 ACCAN Grants projects were announced in a blog published in September. The blog was promoted on social media and in WebNews. The new projects were also mentioned in the Chairperson's Opening Address at the 2017 ACCANect Conference.

The Spring ACCAN Magazine, Your place in the connected world, was published in September and distributed at the ACCANect Conference. Some of the articles from the Magazine were also posted on the ACCAN website as blogs. The first was a blog about ACCAN member organisation, Leep, which covered the organisation's work to close the digital divide. The second was the feature, Your place in the connected world, which explored future consumer issues in the Australian context outlined by Consumers International. The final article was about the UNSW ACCAN Grants project which tested the security and privacy of 20 smarthome devices which are currently on the market. The research found that many of these devices have security flaws that can leave consumer information at risk.

ACCAN published a blog that fact checked statistics released by Communications Alliance and nbn relating to the launch of the TIO Annual Report 2016-17. The blog called out the figures released by each organisation which attempted to put a positive spin on the huge increase in complaints throughout the year.

In early November, ACCAN published a blog outlining proposed changes to Australia's Domain Name System which were being explored in a consultation by auDA. The blog focused on giving stakeholders relevant information about the changes and asking for their feedback and input for ACCAN's submission to the consultation.

ACCAN helped to clear up consumer confusion around the ACCC's announcement that Telstra would compensate 42,000 customers for unattainable broadband speeds with a blog post published in November. This announcement received extensive media coverage, some of which contained incorrect information about who exactly was to be compensated. ACCAN's blog post outlined what the issue was, who was affected and what consumers should do.

A blog published in late November helped to clear up consumer confusion around nbn's announcement that it would pause the rollout of HFC to fix issues with current services. The blog highlighted five situations that consumers in HFC areas might find themselves in and how this announcement will affect them.

Between 1 September – 30 November, 2017, ACCAN generated 251 media mentions across national print, online, TV and radio. This is an average of 84 items per month. The majority of ACCAN's coverage (55 per cent) was in online articles. Print articles made up 31 per cent of the coverage, while radio made up 13 per cent and TV accounted for one per cent.