

Quarter 4, FY15-16

The summary below outlines ACCAN's activities from 1 March 2016 to 31 May 2016.

This quarter has been marked by significant success for ACCAN, with the impact of our earlier work resulting in some significant wins for communications consumers. Of particular note is our success towards the adoption of an accessible ICT government procurement policy, the ACMA incorporating our suggested approach to the revised International Mobile Roaming (IMR) Standard, and the actions of the ACCC against misleading peak/off peak data advertising. The focus of our formal submission work was on the Treasury's Australian Consumer Law (ACL) Review, and the Department's consultation on NRS Communications Accessibility. Both were major projects for ACCAN, involving extensive member consultation, and supporting research to provide a solid evidence base for our responses. Our other advocacy work was shaped by two areas of notable consumer concern. Firstly, there is evidence that vulnerable consumers may be adversely affected by connection delays on Telstra nbn services, an issue we have raised with Telstra, nbn and the ACMA. Secondly, consumers have repeatedly raised concerns with us about Telstra and Optus third party billing, and unexpected mobile subscription charges. We have engaged with Optus, Telstra, Vodafone and the ACMA on this issue, and have been assured by Optus and Telstra that the introduction of double opt-in requirements will address the issue.

All Grants Scheme projects are tracking well against the set milestones and coming close to completion for the end of the round 2015-16 round. Final reports have been completed by the 'Going online on behalf of others' and 'Our Phones, Our rights' projects and are now being prepared for publication. The ACCAN research project *Megacharge* was launched publicly, following our successful briefing with industry, as reported in the previous quarter.

During the quarter ACCAN launched its new website. The website has received resoundingly positive feedback from consumers and ACCAN stakeholders. Along with the new web site, ACCAN also launched during the quarter, the 2nd Edition of the Community Consultation Guide, the Sky Muster NBN satellite guide (to coincide with the availability of the new Sky Muster satellite services, and the Federal Election webpage).

From March – May, ACCAN published 12 online news stories. These articles covered a range of topics including the Mobile Black Spot Programme, pre-paid plans, NBN internet plans and third party charges on mobile phone bills. The Autumn edition of the ACCAN Magazine, *Quality Communications Services*, was distributed during the quarter with articles about what affects broadband performance, billing methods and rural/remote internet issues. An article about pre-paid plans that expire after 28-days was published and following a spike in complaints to the TIO about third party charges on mobile phone bills, ACCAN published a comprehensive article on the issue.

In late May, ACCAN published an article that gives general information to consumers and small businesses on how to seek compensation from telecommunications outages. ACCAN also welcomed the announcement of more specialised services for SMBs.

ACCAN participated in regular meetings with key stakeholders in the March – May quarter. This last quarter has seen an intensive focus on stakeholder liaison, with numerous meetings with industry (particularly Telstra, Optus and Vodafone) and nbn over a range of issues. We raised a number of telecommunications privacy issues at the first meeting of the OAIC Consumer Privacy Network in May. Other activities included our regular consumer representation on industry and government committees, presentation of the ACCAN Megacharge research project at the National Consumer Congress, and participation in the review of the TIO's Financial Hardship Guide with industry and ACCAN member organisations. The ACCAN CEO presented at the Communications Day conference.

Planning for the 2016 ACCAN National Conference has commenced in earnest with a number of key sponsors already committed. A vibrant and informative program is being compiled and new branding with the name 'ACCANect' has been adopted. The venue is booked and marketing has commenced.

Our consumer outreach work has focused on grass roots community events (such as a Probus group in the Hunter Valley/Newcastle area), small business engagement in Western Australia and important ACCAN member events such as the two day Financial Counselling Australia Conference in Adelaide, all good opportunities for ACCAN to promote its work and useful consumer resources. Our Member Advisory Forum met to inform our work priorities, strategic approach and research in 2016/17, and our ongoing close collaboration with our members was supported by face to face meetings, as well as regular less formal contact.

Between 1 March – 31 May 2016, ACCAN generated 124 media mentions across national print, online, TV and radio, with an average of 41 items per month. The majority of ACCAN's coverage for the quarter (62 per cent) was in online coverage. Print articles made up 23 per cent of the coverage, radio accounted for eight per cent and TV for seven per cent. Five media releases were issued covering issues including mobile black spots, megabyte rounding in mobile phone plans and TV accessibility. Over the quarter, ACCAN responded to 25 media enquiries on topics including pre-paid plans, the Do Not Call Register and broadband performance monitoring. This resulted in 60 pieces of media coverage across 33 publications/programs.