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Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN)

ACCAN Communications Consumer Congress

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Captioned by: Bernadette McGoldrick & Kasey Allen

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ANDREW WILLIAMS: OK, everybody, we might get back under way. I know there's been a few airline changes over the course of the day, so I suspect there's a number of people keen to, or need to, make a reasonably quick getaway. So, we will definitely have you out of here, this finished on schedule by 4:00. So, this afternoon, we've got another great array of panels and conversations. But we're going to kick off now with - as foreshadowed by Julian Thomas this morning - with a prerecorded presentation from the Shadow Minister for Communications, David Coleman. And the Minister mentioned some of the work the Government is doing on risk and resilience, so Shadow Minister Coleman's presentation will be followed by our Deputy CEO, Gareth Downing, will lead a panel discussion on that very topic. So, straight after Minister Coleman, we will convene that panel and get the afternoon back under way. Over to Shadow Minister Coleman. Thank you.

DAVID COLEMAN: Hello. It's great to have been able to join you from Canberra. Firstly, I want to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which you meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past and present. I want to recognise ACCAN CEO Andrew Williams, your Chairperson Professor Julian Thomas, and thank your team for putting on this event. Thank you to ACCAN for everything you do, it's very important. I want to acknowledge key speakers and contributors, including Minister Rowland, who you would have heard from earlier, along with ACMA Chair and agency head Nerida O'Loughlin and the Australian Information Commissioner and Privacy Commissioner Angelene Falk. There are several issues that I want to talk about today with a particular focus on consumers. Firstly, I would like to touch on the issue of scams. Now, we're hearing a lot about how many people continue to be affected by scams - scams that come through telco delivery and scams that come

through the internet. Now, it's a massive problem and we need to see more steps taken than we have been seeing to date. Not just in the area of telcos but scams on digital platforms too. Now, the digital platforms services inquiry has had a lot to say about this and there remains a significant amount of work to be done in this area. Now, affordable telecommunications is incredibly important to consumers, to ACCAN, and to our whole nation, and that's why one of my top priorities has been to ensure fairness and transparency into government schemes, like the Mobile Black Spot Program. There needs to be a merit-based allocation of funding for new telecommunications infrastructure so that better communications infrastructure goes to those who have been assessed to have the greatest need for funding support. Now, that's self-evident. Pricing of the NBN is one of the concerns to consumers. One of the concerns which I have been flagging was a push to artificially force families from the 50-megabit plan to the 100-megabit plan. I have been making the case that fast speeds are good, of course, but price increases shouldn't be used as a way of forcing households off plans that are working well for them. We've seen the NBN issue a new variation to its Special Access Undertaking, or SAU, and we'll be interested in what the ACCC makes of that following consultation on the proposal. But at a time when millions of Australians are facing cost-of-living pressures on multiple fronts, we certainly don't need a breakout in prices for the NBN added to that list.

Now, tightening-up on gambling advertising has been another priority of mine. The Coalition was very happy to lead the debate on banning gambling advertising during live sport. Now, I know the Government is considering recommendations of a parliamentary inquiry into this issue and we'll look at Government suggestions when they come back with a plan, but we know that many Australians are saying, "Enough

is enough," and change is needed in this area. So, we do need to see the Government act on banning gambling advertising during live sport.

And, finally, AI. The hype reflects the reality - that AI is going to change the world. Governments should not overregulate AI, as this would lead to less investment in Australia and higher costs for consumers. But it's important that the Government sets in place a clear plan for dealing with high-risk issues related to AI. And the Government also needs to ensure that owners of intellectual property are fairly compensated when their work is used by AI software developers. AI is an immensely important issue and will be very important for consumers of Australian technology in the future.

So, thank you very much for tuning in to this quick video.

Communications and the communications sector are so critical in many areas of our lives and the economy, and that's why it's critical we get these things done and we get them done right. Thanks very much.

(APPLAUSE)