



Media Release

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TIO complaints reveal need for updated safeguards

[ACCAN](#) is disappointed that complaints to the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman (TIO) have increased by a massive 41.1 per cent during 2016-17. This rise in complaints is reflective of the experiences we are hearing from consumers and indicates there are systemic issues with customer service in the industry. Customer service was the top complaint issue overall. The report shows that all services and providers saw an increase in complaints indicating a genuine need to update consumer protections.

“We are very concerned about the significant, across the board, increase in complaints for landline, mobile and internet services,” said ACCAN Deputy CEO, Narelle Clark. “This reverses the previous downward trend in complaint levels. We are therefore calling on all providers to lift their game and act to immediately improve customer service and the consumer experience.”

Given the huge number of complaints about customer service, ACCAN believes that improved consumer protections are clearly needed more than ever before. ACCAN considers the current review of the Telecommunications Consumer Protections (TCP) Code must improve community safeguards, especially in the areas of sales, service and contracts, billing, credit and debt management, changing suppliers, and complaint handling. ACCAN believes the industry must use this review to ensure enhanced consumer protections and better customer service.

Another consumer safeguard, the Customer Service Guarantee (CSG), has not been updated to match the technology and services consumers rely on. The current CSG only applies to some phone/voice services. The high number of complaints about internet services and internet services delivered over the NBN shows an urgent need for a CSG that applies to internet services, puts in place obligations on the wholesale network as well as retail providers, and includes timeframes for fixing faults and getting connected. This is underlined by the fact that the highest NBN complaint numbers were from new connection delays and completely unusable internet services.

“Today we rely on our internet services more than ever before to access everything we need. When consumers face repeated missed appointments with no reliable assurance of when a working service will commence they become rightfully angry.

“The complaint statistics show that many consumers are being left with no connection or a service that is completely unusable. This is not acceptable and it’s clear there is an urgent need for updated consumer guarantees. Considering the rollout of the NBN has reached scale and more consumers are making the switch, this must change,” added Ms Clark.

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The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia’s peak communications consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers.

When consumers encounter issues ACCAN encourages them to make a complaint to their provider and escalate it to the TIO if needed. If the service is poor, consumers should consider switching providers. They should expect good service from their provider.

For more information, contact Luke Sutton on luke.sutton@accan.org.au or 0409 966 931. For the latest updates, follow ACCAN on [Twitter](#) or like us on [Facebook](#).

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